PRAYER

M.L. ANDREASEN

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INTRODUCTION

In some respects this is the most godless age the world has ever known. At the same time there is probably more praying being done than ever before. If this seems paradoxical, consider this:

Millions, even hundreds of millions of men have been called to arms in recent years. Most of the men who went into battle prayed, even if they had never prayed before. Many of the young men were away from home for the first time. They had been given a Bible or a New Testament, and were deeply moved as they bade farewell to loved ones and promised mother not to forget God. Millions of prayers ascended to God before each battle or invasion, as men lay in their foxholes awaiting the zero hour. Under such conditions men pray.

If millions of men who were called to the colors prayed, what shall we say of the millions of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, sweethearts and relatives who daily prayed for their loved ones in the service or on the battle line? It may be supposed that there was hardly a family anywhere that did not have some loved one for whom they prayed. And this is true not merely of so-called Christian countries, but of all. We are safe in saying that never has the whole world had its attention called to prayer as at this time, and never before have so many prayed. We read of men praying while hanging on to a plank with no help near; praying in a plane as it is shot to pieces and they are about to bail out; praying in dangerous outposts where death seemed certain—and God heard their prayers and miraculously saved them. From this we understand that while the evil one is at work maiming and killing, God is at work calling men to Him.

If we should inquire if this praying brought about a

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corresponding permanent increase in godliness, we would regretfully answer that this does not seem to be the case. On the contrary, there has been a definite increase in juvenile delinquency, and an over-all increase in crime in general. It would be quite useless to cite statistics to confirm this; for the figures would be obsolete before they were published. Nor would a portrayal of actual conditions serve any purpose. The reader is fully aware of the definite decline in manners and morals. Conduct that was frowned upon a short time ago has become commonplace. There was a time when we thought conditions could never be worse; but we were mistaken.

How are we to account for these conditions in view of the much praying of which we have spoken? I believe that the reason can be found in the motives that activate the one who prays. Prayers and promises made because of fear or to escape danger are often forgotten when the crisis is past. As men looked to God from lonely outposts or foxholes, were their prayers grounded in a deep, abiding faith in God, or were they caused by mortal fear of death and of the possibility that shortly the men would have to give an account to their Maker? Did men who spent the last day of their leave in unnamable debaucheries and wild excesses of all kinds immediately change their course of action and turn to the Lord with their whole heart? As I visited army camps I was reminded of the times when mother sent me out to catch a chicken and get it ready for the oven. With a knife in hand I would chase the chicken, and pause for a breath as it evaded me. Instead of using the pause to get away from me as far as possible, the chicken ceased to run as soon as I did, and began to pick up scraps, apparently unaware of, and unconcerned about, the fate that awaited it. Some men exhibit no more sense than did my chicken.

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Were there not many who found God in their war experience? Yes, many, thank God! But the overwhelming number forgot God and their promises to Him; and the result is seen in the upsurge of sin and crime in the war's after years, as is always the case. Nevertheless, God brought more men to a decision for religious faith in the foxholes than all the evangelists of earth could accomplish. His hand is not shortened; He has means of which men know little.

God at Work

God is not the author of war and calamity any more than He is of sin. But He uses these disasters to call men's attention to the only source of help. He has implanted deeply in every heart a consciousness of Himself to which men instinctively turn in moments of sorrow or danger. This can be explained on no other ground than that God has made the human heart for Himself, and that souls find no rest until they find it in God.

A national disaster comes, and men turn to God. High government officials are faced with a decision that may cost the lives of millions, and they appeal to heaven. A great responsibility is suddenly placed upon a man in high position, and we find a president on his knees. A family stands at the bedside of a loved one, and prayer is their only hope. Men who have never prayed before unashamedly acknowledge that their own resources are at an end. And so they pray.

Can we draw any other conclusion than that God has placed in the human heart longings and desires that ordinarily do not come to the surface, but become apparent in times of distress and danger?

> Deep in the human heart, crushed by the tempter
> Feelings lie buried that grace can restore.

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God Is Willing

The fear or sorrow that awakens the consciousness of God may not be the highest motive for seeking God, any more than was the hunger that brought the prodigal son to turn home. But God is willing to accept almost any ground as long as it accomplishes His purpose. So the father received the prodigal with open arms, though the son's purpose was chiefly to get something to eat. God accepts and uses sorrow, hunger, affliction, disaster, fear, in calling men.

This conception of God's methods of work makes His presence very real to the believing soul. He sees God at work everywhere, using every means at His disposal to call men to repentance. He knows that God has not left Himself without a witness, and that every man has this witness in himself, "so that they are without excuse." Romans 1:20.

This should give the Christian worker a strong hope for success in his task of helping men to find God. He knows that God is at work and has implanted in every heart a responsive chord to the call of God. Men may resist the call; but with God on their side, they are not discouraged.

We therefore believe that the present is an opportune time to call attention to prayer and what it may do or not do for souls in need. The situation in the world demands a deeper consecration on the part of God's people. The work that must be done can never be accomplished by merely using better plans or new devices. It will not be finished by might or by power, but by the Spirit of God. It will be finished by prayer and deeper consecration, by men and women who know their God and who go forward in faith.

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1

In God's Presence

IT IS considered a great honor and a rare privilege to be received in audience at a royal court, even though a hundred others are received at the same time. There is considerable rivalry among visitors to the British Isles to obtain the much-coveted invitation to a palace function where they are introduced to royalty. If invited, they spend much time preparing for the occasion. It is indeed the event of a lifetime. They read carefully the rules which govern their appearance, the proper way of addressing royalty, and what they may do or not do in the royal presence. The occasion is never forgotten; and if any remark is addressed to them by royalty, the words are ever cherished.

We need not attempt to compare or contrast such an occasion with that of appearing before the most high God in private audience. If the one is wonderful, the other is a thousand times more so. There can in reality be no comparison, only contrast; for God is beyond compare.

In prayer we enter the presence of God, the audience chamber of the Most High. Not, as on earth, are we ushered into an outer reception room with hundreds of others, but into the throne room itself, the inmost sanc-

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tuary of God, for a private audience with the ruler of the universe. It is doubtful that even the greatest of the saints fully appreciate the honor thus bestowed. And this honor is granted the lowliest of men! Wonder upon wonders!

In private prayer, as in public worship, we too often engage in communion with God as a matter of duty or custom and repeat certain phrases without thought as to their meaning. It is a pious practice learned from others or remembered from childhood. We cling to it as something we "ought" to do. We feel that if our prayers seem to do little good, at least they do no harm.

Such is a far cry from what God intends prayer to be. Prayer is not a common occasion for which no preparation is needed. It is an audience with God.

God's Plan for Man

We need to understand more about prayer than we do. Why does God want us to pray? He knows what we need, so why does He not simply give us what we ought to have? What are the conditions upon which rests the answer? What may we expect from prayer?

In God's universal plan men were intended to occupy a high position as co-workers with Him. To prepare them for this work they were to be subjected to certain tests to ascertain if they were worthy of their future high calling; if they stood these tests they were eventually to take their place as members of the household of God.

Such a plan involved a period of instruction and training which would demonstrate their capacity for learning the necessary lessons. During this time they would have the opportunity of deciding whether or not the life promised them by God as a reward for their work was worth the discipline necessary to meet the standard God has set for inclusion in His family. At any time they would be

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at liberty to terminate the agreement; and should they once more change their minds and wish to return to their allegiance to God, He would give them the opportunity, until they at last had irrevocably settled the question for or against God. If their decision was against life, they would eventually return to the earth whence they came. If they chose life and passed successfully their period of instruction and the final examination, they would be invested with life everlasting and be officially installed as the sons of God.

In the beginning there was open communication between man and his Maker. God was one with man, and the record states that He walked in the garden in the cool of the day. Prayer, such as we now know it, was unknown. Man did not fall to the ground when he talked with God. They communed one with the other as friends do and as Moses did later. "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." Exodus 33:11. There was perfect fellowship, as between father and son. God talked with man, and man talked with God.

After sin came in, this close fellowship ceased. Says God, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear." Isaiah 59:2.

While sin made a separation between man and God, and no direct communication was possible, man was not entirely shut off from God. A way of approach was opened through Christ, and in His name man could reach the ear of God. Jesus Christ declared, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." John 14:6. "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you." John 15:16. According to this, the way to the Father, and the only way, is through the Son. Through Him we may come, and whatever we ask in His name we shall receive.

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This is the "new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Hebrews 10:20.

This new way was first prefigured by the sacrifices offered to God in Old Testament times. These sacrifices were ordained to help man keep in mind that he was a sinner and as such deserved death, but that a way had been found by which he might come back to God and find access through the death of the sacrifice. Thus we find that Cain and Abel brought their sacrifices to God, "in process of time." Genesis 4:3, 4. In thus bringing a lamb from his flock, the sinner acknowledged his guilt and admitted that he was worthy of death. As he slew the animal he demonstrated that he understood that the wages of sin is death and that he was not worthy of life. The sacrifice also showed his belief that God accepted a substitute in his stead, and that the lamb died that he might live. Thus the sacrifice signified two things: man's acknowledgement of the justice of God in requiring punishment, and a demonstration of the mercy of God in providing and accepting a substitute to die in the sinner's place. On the sinner's part it was an act of faith for him to accept the provision and follow precisely the rules for the offering of the sacrifice.

The First Recorded Offering

In the first sacrificial scene mentioned in the Bible (Genesis 4:3-15), "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous" (Hebrews 11:4). "Unto Cain and to his offering He [God] had not respect." Genesis 4:5. The difference between the offerings of Abel and Cain lay in the nature of their sacrifices. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord;" Abel like-

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wise brought an offering of the fruit of the ground; but in addition "he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof." Verses 3, 4. In bringing a lamb from his flock, Abel confessed that he had sinned and was worthy of death. He brought the lamb as a sin offering and asked God to forgive him and accept the lamb in his stead. Thus he showed his faith in the true Lamb of God. The Bible declares that "the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect." Verses 4, 5.

In their simplest form, sacrifices were embodied prayers. It was at the altar that men met God, and here He accepted or rejected their prayers as they were symbolized by the offerings brought. Each offering had in itself the elements of prayer: confession of sin symbolized by the sacrifice; acceptance by God of the sacrifice, which meant God's acceptance of the sinner's prayer and repentance; and man's faith in both God's justice and His mercy. Sacrifices accepted meant sins forgiven. In each case where a sacrifice was brought and accepted, the record says, "It shall be forgiven him." Leviticus 4:26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18.

The offering of the sacrifices brought vividly to mind the seriousness of sin and the great cost of transgression; and the slaying of the victim by the sinner was intended to bring him to the decision, "Go, and sin no more." If this was the result of the offering, the aim of the sacrifice and the sacrificial system had been accomplished.

The True Meaning of Sacrifice

To the informed Israelite it must early have become clear that the sacrifice of an animal could not take away sin, but that it was only an object lesson to make more vivid to the mind that sin meant death, and that what

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counted was the sinner's attitude of repentance and confession. David understood this clearly when he said, "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." "Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering." Psalm 51:3, 16. He then states God's real desire: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." Verse 17. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Psalm 34:18. To this the prophets agreed. See Micah 6:6-8; Isaiah 1:10-20; Jeremiah 6:20; 7:21-23; Amos 5:21-24.

When Israel came to regard sacrifices in themselves as efficacious and forgot that what God demanded was a humble and contrite heart, God abolished the sacrifices. He still retained, however, the vital elements—prayer, a humbling of the heart before God, a broken spirit, a contrite heart, and an intense desire to go and sin no more. These are God's requirements today.

Not all believers in Old Testament times confined their prayers to the occasions when they brought their offerings. They prayed as we do now, and God heard their prayers. The prophets understood clearly that sacrifices were only a temporary arrangement, one that could safely be ignored when further light came. Hence we find prophets speaking lightly of sacrificial offerings while stressing spiritual attainments. Christ did not Himself bring any offering to the temple and He ignored all the temple ceremonies.

In Old Testament times it appears that prayer was more natural and unaffected than now. Men of old talked with God, and He answered them directly. Their prayers took the form of a conversation rather than of a formal petition. The prophets particularly appear to have been

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on speaking terms with God, generally getting their orders in dreams and visions, but also at times by word of mouth. While in some respects we may know more about religion than did the men of old, they knew far more about how to approach God. It is high time that we come back to communion with God and learn to "practice His presence."

"The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." Exodus 33:11. From one such interview with God, Moses came down from the mount and was not aware that "the skin of his face shone" while he talked with God. Exodus 34:29. This reflection of the glory of God was so strong that Aaron and the people "were afraid to come nigh him." Verse 30. And so Moses "put a veil on his face. But when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he took the veil off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with Him." Verses 33-35.

That God spoke with Moses face to face became so well known that even the Egyptians heard of it. Said Moses, "They have heard that Thou Lord art among this people, that Thou Lord art seen face to face, and that Thy cloud standeth over them, and that Thou goest before them, by daytime in a pillar of cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night." Numbers 14:14. It would be well if God's people at this time could come so close to God that men and nations would hear of it. The work would then be finished speedily.

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2

Why Should Men Pray?

WHY should we pray? God knows all things. He knows what we need without our telling Him. A child does not beg his father for food, clothing, and shelter. These are provided for him as a matter of course. Why should we beg our Father in heaven for the things we need, which He knows we need? May we not take it for granted that God will give us what we need without having to be coaxed to do so? Why demean men by requiring them to beg on their knees for the things the Father should provide?

The answer is that God does provide for all, whether they pray or not, and He is no respecter of persons. He sends rain on the just and the unjust. Matthew 5:45. No one needs to beg for anything. God provides for all with strict impartiality. In fact, often the wicked prosper more than do the righteous. Doubtless for good reasons, God permits this. If He prospered only the righteous, and the wicked were cursed with poverty, some might turn to God for no other reason than the hope of reward. This would merely be a bribe to induce men to accept God, and such is inconsistent with God's plan or practice. God would have men make their choice for good or ill uninfluenced

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by hope of reward or fear of punishment in this life.

Because God treats all fairly and without bias, we find some men prospering financially while hating God. On the other hand, we find seemingly godly men barely eking out a living. The first work industriously, take good care of their herds and flocks, and are diligent in all that they undertake. The second are lax and careless, pray much and work little, and feel that God should support them. An unbelieving surgeon who has prepared well for his work may be more skillful and successful than the Christian physician who believes that he need not make such thorough preparation since God is on his side and will help him.

Why, then, pray? If God does not give special help to the one who asks; if he has to study as hard and prepare as much as the one who does not pray, why pray? If the praying farmer must work his field as thoroughly as does his nonpraying neighbor, of what advantage is prayer? Why should the medical student ask God for help when in the end he is not necessarily a better surgeon than his agnostic friend?

A Distorted View of Confession

These questions are all based on the assumption that prayer is a means of getting something out of God without having to work for it. The unbelieving man works for his success. Can a Christian substitute prayer for work? Not according to God's plan. Prayer definitely is not a substitute for work, or for anything else. Prayer and repentance may effect forgiveness; but ordinarily they will not change or even modify the consequences of evil done, nor will the penalty be remitted. David may confess and deeply repent of his sin, but the consequences are not removed. See 2 Samuel 12:13, 14. This is a principle that

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men may forget and that needs to be called to their attention.

Some years ago one of my students had been dishonest in an important examination. He was an average student, but his examination paper was so good that he was given a final B. Some time later his conscience disturbed him and he wrote me a letter of confession, deeply regretting that he had cheated. I answered him that I was glad he had written. I accepted his apology and informed him that I had changed his grade from a "B" to an "F." By return mail I received an indignant protest against what I had done, stating if this was the result of confession, he would certainly never confess again. Did not his confession deserve a B? He failed to understand why I could not report a B for work he had not done, and he failed to see that the confession did not in any way alter the fact that he had been dishonest and had not done the work required for a B grade. Had a good grade been given him as a result of his confession, it would be inconsistent not to do the same for others who had also cheated, which would clearly be unjust to all other students who had honestly earned their grades. Confession that is based on hope of reward is not true confession.

God does not bribe a man by promising him exemption from punishment if he will confess. True, there is a reward for the obedient, but obedience or confession based on reward is of doubtful value. In fact, it has no moral value whatsoever. It is of the same nature as the obedience of a child based on the promise of candy if he will behave properly.

It was this principle that was at stake in the case of Job. Satan sneeringly asked God, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" Satan insinuated that Job's fear of God was motivated by the fact that God had prospered him, that

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he was religious because it paid him rich returns. God had put a hedge about him so that no evil could touch him; He had "blessed the work of his hands," and increased his substance in the land. Job 1:10. But if God should turn from him and cease to bless him with worldly goods, he would curse God to His face. Verse 11.

God accepted Satan's complaint, saying, "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand." Verse 12.

In initiating this trial, God was seeking to disprove Satan's contention that Job served God because it paid him to do so. He wanted to show that there was one man in the world who served God without selfish motives, one who would not renounce God though He removed His favors from him. In this matter God depended on Job, though Job was not aware of how much hung on his decision.

Armed with God's permission to deprive Job of his possessions, Satan took away from Job all he had, even his children. He did thorough work. The servants reported one calamity after another.

Stunned as was Job by these unlooked-for calamities, he calmly exclaimed, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." Verses 21, 22.

Satan stood defeated. He had claimed that if God would take away from Job what he had, he would curse God. Instead of this, Job blessed the name of the Lord. It was a signal victory for God; for Satan himself had laid down the conditions of the test, and God had agreed to them. Job had not failed God. He had proved that at least one man did not serve God for profit.

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Satan was defeated; but before long he came back claiming he had lost because God had not permitted him to touch Job bodily. If God would permit Satan to "touch his bone and his flesh," Job would curse God to His face. Job 2:5. God agreed to change the rules of the test, saying, "Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life." Verse 6.

Satan now "smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown." Verse 7. Job still did not know why God permitted this trial, but his faith did not fail. His wife advised him to curse God and die; but Job was not moved. "What?" he said, "shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" The result was the same as in the first test. "In all this did not Job sin with his lips." Verse 10.

The test was ended. God had demonstrated that the accusations and claims of Satan were false. Job had not served God for reward. In triumphant words Job gives voice to his faith: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Job 13:15.

Why Pray?

When the question is raised, Why pray? the background of the inquiry is that some supposed temporal advantage is to be gained by prayer, and that if there is no such advantage, there is no reason to pray. This puts praying on a commercial basis and ignores the true ground of prayer.

Prayer in essence is communion with God, conversing with Him as we would with a friend. Why do we associate and talk with our friends? Not to get something from them to enrich ourselves. The very thought of such considerations is foreign to true friendship or fellowship. Why do those who love each other like to associate one with the other, talk together, sit together? For the simple

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reason that they love each other. No other explanation is needed. Any supposed personal gain is far from their thoughts. Indeed, such a motive would be fatal to love. Love is based on giving, not receiving.

Why pray? Why love? We might as well ask, why breathe? One is as natural and necessary as the other. Where there is love, there is communion, there is prayer. It could not be otherwise.

Why pray? is a strange question to ask a Christian, for prayer is such a natural thing to him that he cannot conceive of life without it. If we should ask a little boy why he runs to his mother to tell her of his joys and sorrows, to show her some little treasure he has found, or tell her an experience he has had, he would be perplexed and wonder why such a question should be asked. Where else could he go? What else could he do? Mother can solve all problems. She is his source of wisdom. She can kiss away bruises; she can dry tears. She knows what to do in every case. Mother understands. At times he runs to her just to tell her that he loves her. The little pat on the cheek, the loving kiss, the sweet words, "Mamma loves you, too"—all these explain why he runs to mother. To him it is a strange and silly question to inquire why he runs to mother. He probably concludes that grownups don't know much. And he is right.

Likewise the Christian wonders how anyone can ask why he prays. He asks God for daily bread and receives it; but he knows that his unbelieving neighbor also gets bread without asking God for it. He knows that God feeds the ravens and the sparrows and wicked men. Then why pray? Because with the daily bread he receives something which the unbeliever does not receive because he does not ask for it, not being willing to comply with the conditions upon which the receiving depends.

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As the child grows, the father knows that his boy will need more than food and clothing and daily bread. He will need companionship and fellowship. He will need the counsel of an understanding father. The son may not himself realize how much he needs such help; but the father knows and willingly does his best.

So with the father in heaven. He gives bread for the body to all; and to those who desire it He gives food for the soul and mind. He liberally offers this to all, but many accept the temporal food and reject the spiritual, to their own eternal loss. God offers it to them; He reaches out His hand to them, but only a few meet the hand of God. What more can God do? It grieves Him deeply when men reject His offer.

Why pray? Not primarily to get something out of God. Nothing is more worthy of condemnation than cultivating friendship for personal advantage. A sycophant is merely a vampire in human form. A friendship must not be used to extract gain.

Why pray? Because we are friends of God. There is nothing holier than friendship grounded in unselfish love. It is a bit of heaven on earth, a foretaste of the communion of saints in glory where the loves and sympathies which God has implanted in the human breast shall find fullest and freest expression.

Friendship

"Ye are My friends," says Christ. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends." John 15:14, 15.

"Ye are My friends." Can anything be more glorious or wonderful? To have a friend whom you can trust, to whom you can speak freely, and to whom you can open the deepest recesses of the heart and know that he will

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understand; one who regards your confidence as a solemn trust not to be divulged; one to whom you can confide your most sacred longings and ambitions and who will not in his heart ridicule or belittle them; one in whose heart is locked your love and who reciprocates your feelings; one who will not mistrust you though he may not always understand; one who will defend you when others misunderstand and who will stand by you when the world turns against you; one who will refuse to suspect evil, though appearances are against you; one who, though absent or far away, remains the same; one who loves you though he knows your weaknesses, who will traverse the continent to be by your side in time of sorrow or of need; one who will never leave you nor forsake you—this is the ultimate in human friendship!

If you have such a friend, hold on to him. Let not storm or tempest, rain, snow, fire, or water separate you from him; cling to him in life and death; commune with him; communicate with him; love him. We have such a friend in Christ. Never forsake Him. He will not forsake you.

Fellowship

Prayer is more than talking with God or talking to Him. It is fellowship with God, life with God. The highest joy in fellowship or friendship is not found in talking, but rather in the communion of spirits which transcends words. True friends may spend precious seasons together without speaking a word. Two may sit silently by the oceanside, hand in hand, and enjoy the sweet communion in silence. Two may walk together through the woods and enjoy communion with nature, with God, and with each other without a word spoken. Two may kneel in consecration, dedicating themselves to God and to each

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other, and there will be perfect understanding in the soul. There may be communion of heart and spirit without any outward recognition. Of words there may be none; but love, friendship, allegiance, are there, and quiet joy and surpassing happiness. Those who have had such experiences will understand the story of two lifelong friends who as life's shadows were lengthening would sit together of an afternoon without a word being spoken; and when evening came, one would express the feeling of both, "We have had a delightful time this afternoon." Those who understand this kind of friendship will never ask, "Why pray?"

Life with God may be experienced here and now. Heaven is not merely a future possession; it is a present reality. I am writing this while ten thousand feet in the air, flying over the island of Sumatra. The report from the captain has just announced the altitude, speed, temperature, and weather conditions. My dearest friends are far away; but I have never been more conscious of, or rejoiced more in, their love than at this moment. I know they love me; I know they are praying for me. In that love and knowledge I rest.

There is no more beautiful expression of the love of God than that found in Zephaniah 3:17. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save; . . . He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing." The picture is that of a mother sitting quietly with her little one, singing in her joy and resting in her love, while the little one snuggles close to her breast. A most beautiful scene of rest, contentment, and love. This is the picture God uses in illustrating His love for us. He is ever thinking of us. As a mother quietly sings to her little one, so God sings in His love for us. He rests in His love. It is the height of peace and contentment for Him, whose

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nature is love. How can we help loving Him who first loved us? How can we help communing with Him when we get a glimpse of God and the fathomless love surrounding and enveloping Him? Prayer is communion; prayer is life; prayer is love; prayer is the breath of the soul. How can a Christian live and not pray?

Coming Home

When we get a clear view of the great Father heart of love, we can nevermore be disheartened or discouraged. God rejoices over us with singing, eagerly awaiting the time when all the children shall be home. Even now He is rejoicing in anticipation of that which is to come. He is happy in His love, and preparing for that great event of the ages, the homecoming of all the children of God in earth and heaven. Even to God this is a great day. While we are waiting for Christ to come, God is waiting for us to come. And His love and longing is even greater than ours. He has waited a long while.

And so we pray because we need God, need His love and fellowship, need His care and guidance. We pray because we love Him who first loved us, and because we find in Him a satisfaction of the soul not obtainable elsewhere. We pray not to get what *we* want, but to find out what *He* wants. We pray not to get Him to change His mind, but to have our minds changed. We pray not to have Him change His plans for us, but to ask Him to help us willingly to accept His plans. We pray not primarily to avoid pain, but for strength to bear it. We pray not to be taken out of the world, but to be kept faithful while in it. We pray not to escape hardship or trials, but for patience to endure them. We pray not to escape work, but for wisdom to know how to do it and do it well. We pray, first and last, because we love Him

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who has so loved us, because we treasure His fellowship and that of the saints.

It is a sad fact that with many Christians praying is a task that must be done, something that we *ought* to do, but for which we have no true urge, something which is a duty rather than a privilege. Such an attitude is not confined to lukewarm Christians. It is habitual with many persons who may be considered good Christians. In many cases this can be traced to a dim conception of the meaning of prayer and its possibilities. They *say* their prayers, they recite them; they have not learned to pour out their souls to God, and are getting only a few crumbs when they might have a full repast. Let such give study to prayer and its possibilities. Let them add to their prayers meditation. Let them learn to talk with God as with a friend, and they will find reaches of which they never dreamed.

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3

Kinds of Prayer

THERE are several kinds of prayer, all addressed to God, yet each of a different nature. The most common kind is that of petition, wherein we ask God for some favor or a special blessing. We may pray for guidance, for protection, for success in an undertaking, for patience, for a deeper understanding of the things of God, or for any one of many other things. All such prayers are prayers of petition, and are acceptable to God. They are not often used alone, but are generally blended with other prayers, such as those of thanksgiving, praise, and adoration.

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Giving thanks to God for blessings received or for any other favors is most appropriate. Too often we accept blessings from God as a matter of course and forget to give thanks for them. Once Christ cleansed ten lepers and sent them to show themselves to the priests. Of these ten only one returned to give thanks to God. Said Jesus, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And He said unto him, Arise, go thy

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way: thy faith hath made thee whole." Luke 17:17-19. Paul exhorts us to give "thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ephesians 5:20.

The pages of Scripture are embellished with prayers of thanksgiving. The Psalms contain songs and prayers of thanksgiving to the Lord:

> "O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;
> for His steadfast love endures forever!
> Let the redeemed of the Lord say so,
> whom He has redeemed from trouble."
>
> "Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love,
> for His wonderful works to the sons of men!
> Let them extol Him in the congregation of the people,
> and praise Him in the assembly of the elders."
> Psalm 107:1, 2, 31, 32, R.S.V.

In our prayers we generally thank God for His many blessings; but often the thanksgiving is a routine form without any deep feeling. Saying grace at meals, thanking God for daily food, is a commendable practice; but that also may become a form without any real spirit of thankfulness. In war concentration camps many learned to give thanks to God for any little morsel of food, and when liberated were perplexed that some seemed to take food for granted and were not especially thankful for the bounties set before them.

Prayer of Adoration

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2:14. This is a good example of prayers of adoration. The angels were not asking for any special favor; they were simply ascribing praise to God for His wonderful gift to the children of men. When the

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angels sing one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts;" and when we on earth join in worshiping God and giving glory to His holy name, we are uniting in a prayer of adoration. Isaiah 6:3.

The angel who is seen flying in the midst of heaven, saying, "Fear God, and give glory to Him" (Revelation 14:7), is calling on men to adore the Most High. Prayer of adoration is one of the highest forms of prayer. It is not asking for anything. It is God's approved way of having us declare our love for, and loyalty to, Him.

Intercessory Prayer

Intercessory prayer is so called because in it we are praying for others. When Moses prayed, "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written," his prayer was one of intercession. Exodus 32:32. So was Paul's, when he prayed, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Romans 9:3. Christ's prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34), was likewise intercessory, as was also His high-priestly prayer recorded in John 17.

We have mentioned these different kinds of prayers not to show that one kind is better than another, but rather to point out that true prayer may consist of any one kind or of all kinds blended, and still be acceptable to God. The one who prays will not decide that he will use a certain kind today, and another tomorrow. He simply opens his heart and expresses his inmost desires, and then thanks God that He has heard him. Paul gives good advice and encouraging counsel to such as feel that they are not able to express to God all they would like to or in the way they would like: "Likewise the Spirit also

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helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Romans 8: 26, 27.

"We know not what we should pray for," or, as the margin has it, "We know not how to pray as we ought." Both renderings contain truth. We know neither how to pray or what to pray for as we ought. But in this statement of Paul's, God gives the precious and wonderful promise that the Spirit will help our infirmities, and that though our words but poorly express our desires, the Spirit knows what is in our minds, and will make intercession for us with groaning that cannot be uttered. His pleadings are always "according to the will of God."

Effective Prayer

These two verses quoted, Romans 8:26, 27, contain the secret of effectual and fervent prayer, prayer that will be heard and answered. Our words may not express correctly what we have in mind; in our ignorance of what is for our good we may ask for that which is not best and for which we would not pray if we knew the future; but the Spirit knows what we mean, and our prayers will come up before God so worded that they will harmonize with God's will and we will ask for that which is for our good.

Paul's statement of what the Spirit will do with and for our prayers is a precious one. With this in mind we can come with all boldness and present our case to God. Our words may be crude; but as the Spirit rewords them, they ascend as sweet incense before God and reach the throne of the Most High. We may not have known what we should seek. We may have asked for that which would

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do us definite harm had our prayer been answered. But the Spirit knows the real desire of our heart even if our words do not rightly convey the meaning. Could we hear our prayer as changed by the Spirit, we might not recognize it as our prayer. God and the Spirit work together, and the prayer presented before God is in harmony with Their will. And so God will answer the Spirit's request, which expresses our own deep need. What we get is "according to the will of God." And if so, all is well.

I visit a sick person in the hospital. In my conversation I find that he has a most intense craving for sweets, and so as I leave I give an order at the desk to have a pound of candy delivered to the patient's room. I do not know that sweets are strictly forbidden the patient. I meant to do him a little favor, and I most certainly had no intention of doing him harm; but before the order is sent out, the doctor learns of what I have done, cancels the order, and uses the money for something that will do good and not harm. When I hear of what has happened I thank the doctor and assure him I appreciate his catching my mistake in time.

This illustration is a weak one, but it does bring to mind that we may make a serious mistake even when we mean to do well. God knows what we have in mind, and He is too good and too wise to give us that which in the end will be harmful for us. So in answer to our prayer He may give us that for which we never asked, and we are greatly surprised at *what* God sent us when we asked for something else. This may explain how at times we think God did not hear our prayer when in fact He did hear and answer, though we failed to understand that what God sent *was* the answer.

Paul had some hard lessons to learn in this respect. While still in the full strength of manhood and while

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planning a world-wide gospel campaign, he was imprisoned in Jerusalem, carried from prison to prison, and at last taken to Rome. We may well believe that both Paul and the church sent earnest petitions to God for his release. But God did not answer their petitions. Year after year Paul languished in prison at the time when the church sorely needed him. Doubtless both he and the church wondered why God did not hear their united prayers.

But God knew what He was doing. The church did need Paul's guiding hand in the difficult period of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. But God also knew that Paul needed time to be alone, time for prayer and reflection, time to prepare the documents and epistles which the church would use till the end of time. Had Paul not been imprisoned, we might never have had the precious documents which are known as the "prison epistles," and the invaluable counsel contained in the book of Hebrews. What the church lost while Paul was in prison has been the gain of the church for two millenniums. God knew that Paul wanted above all things to serve where he could do the most good. That place was in prison. When this became evident to Paul, he was content. The "ambassador in bonds" could write, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Philippians 1: 20, 21. He was "ready to be offered," he said, "and the time of my departure is at hand." 2 Timothy 4:6.

Therefore let all take heart. God knows what we mean; He knows what we need; and, whatever comes, we know that it will work together for good to them that love God. Let us be of good cheer. God is at the helm!

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4

What Is Prayer?

PRAYER is not an exclusive Christian practice. All men pray, whether they be heathen, agnostics, idolaters, Buddhists, or of any other religion or superstition; men pray and have always prayed. History records prayers long before the time of Moses, and the Bible informs us that men shall pray to the end of time, even if it be only to the rocks and mountains.

Most of these ancient prayers were not, of course, prayers in the Biblical sense. They were generally offered only in times of emergencies, such as an earthquake, an important battle, a pestilence, prolonged drought, or some other great calamity. They were motivated by fear, often by desire for revenge on enemies; for the Christian concepts of love and concern for the welfare of others appear to be completely absent in some primitive peoples. Their prayers were prayers for themselves and for the destruction of their enemies. Utter selfishness lay at the root of such petitions.

From the beginning of time, men have found themselves face to face with forces of nature with which they could not cope. The thunders roared, the lightnings flashed, evil powers seemed intent on their destruction,

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and men stood helpless against the fury of the elements. A storm at sea would crush their stoutest boat, an earthquake would level their buildings, a volcano would spew out its molten lava, or a pestilence might decimate the people. Utterly helpless, men felt the need of pacifying the evil powers that were evidently intent on their destruction, and of imploring the help of the good gods who sent sunshine and rain and other blessings. Man has been called a praying animal, and not without reason. Prayer is part of man's nature, whatever his skin.

We call attention to this universal practice to stress the fact that prayer is a natural phenomenon common to all mankind. Many non-Christians pray habitually more than do Christians, as witness the Mohammedans and other Eastern religions. Prayer is inborn in man, a part of his nature. Missionaries capitalize on this implanted prayer habit and find it an excellent means of approach to uncivilized people. These people pray already. They need to have their prayers directed to the God of all, the One who made the heavens and the earth.

For the Christian, love of God is the true motive that leads him to pray. Fear, hatred of his enemies, selfishness, love of show, find no place in his thinking. He prays when he is in danger and asks God for protection from harm and accidents; he prays when he is sick or facing serious problems; but he has in mind that these are not the primary motives for prayer. The real ground lies deeper. And so we find that Daniel, when faced with the decree that under pain of death no one might pray to the God of heaven, "went into his house; and . . . kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, *as he did aforetime*." Daniel 6:10. He did not change his practice because of the decree. This illustrates Christian prayer at its best.

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An appeal to God for help in time of crisis is right and proper. The Bible is filled with examples of this kind of prayer. But we are to have in mind that this is not to be the prevalent form of prayer, nor is it of the highest kind. Prayer should not be dependent on a crisis. We are not to do as the little newsboy did. He said he never prayed to God except at night. In the daytime he could take care of himself.

Some are reluctant to call on God when they face a difficult situation, because they have neglected prayer previously. But God is always pleased to have us pray; so no one need feel hesitant. It sometimes takes a special event to start the prayer habit and supply the needed incentive; God recognizes this, and there are occasions when God Himself supplies the event. Israel "wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses." Psalm 107:4-6. When some rebelled against the Lord, "He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses." Verses 12, 13.

"Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saveth them out of their distresses." Verses 17-19. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof." "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses." Verses 23-25, 28.

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These incidents reveal that the Lord uses all manner of means to call men to Him. He did that in olden times, and He does this today. And so we find a man on a raft in the midst of the ocean with certain death facing him, feeling after God and finding Him. An ocean liner goes down in a collision, and thousands pray while the band plays a church hymn. The president of a great nation wrestles with the problem of the emancipation of slaves, facing a decision that may cost much blood and even divide the nation; and finds his solution in prayer. A supreme council of world leaders gathers to decide questions that mean life or death to millions of innocent people, and every head is bowed in devout silence. God has many ways to incite men to prayer. The profound issues before the world teach men to pray as well as to think, and God uses them to further His aim.

God calls all men and uses all means. Men of erudition and scientific attainments, who never prayed before, are learning to seek God today. Working on weapons which threaten the annihilation of the human race, these leaders are appalled as they contemplate the use to which their inventions will be put. So God calls them, and some respond.

Men are discovering that human wisdom is insufficient for the world issues; that mankind is doomed unless some remedy is found. Humanity gropes for light. God is doing His part in awakening men's consciences as they realize the way the world is going. Scientists have released forces which they can no longer control, and men are making a desperate attempt to save themselves from themselves. In their dilemma they are turning to prayer in the hope that some higher power will come to their rescue. In doing this they are admitting their own failure and demonstrating that man cannot save himself—

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a lesson that is being deeply impressed by current events.

At a time such as this it is well for the people of God to take stock of themselves. Have they any power in prayer that the world does not have? Are they taking advantage of the power which is at their command? Have they learned to pray? Have they learned to wrestle with God in prayer? And are they finding in prayer their stay and help? "Men ought always to pray." In a special sense this applies to our present time.

Prayer is the highest spiritual exercise of the soul. In its deeper form it passes into communion and fellowship with God, opens the door to the throne room of the universe, and converses with God as with a friend. In the earthly temple the Mosaic priest came nearest to God when morning and evening he offered incense on the altar. Likewise the Christian comes closest to God in his daily devotions, as his prayers ascend with the sweet incense of Christ's righteousness to the throne of the Almighty.

Some Christians consider prayer a duty to be discharged at stated times to please God. When they have performed their devotions, they rest content that they have done what is required of them. They feel that they have reminded God of what He might otherwise forget or neglect, but to which He will now doubtless give attention. God loves these dear souls who daily call upon Him as a matter of duty; and from heaven He sends the answer to their prayers when it is most needed. He knows the sincere desire of their hearts and overlooks their imperfect approach.

But most Christians pray not as a matter of duty but because they feel the need of communion with their Maker. Some use prayer books and recite the beautifully worded prayers prepared for their use. Others pray ex-

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temporaneously, pouring out their soul's desire in their heart's language which God understands. They pray for loved ones, for missionaries in far-off fields, for the sick and afflicted, for persecuted ones and those that suffer reproach for the Lord's sake; they humbly petition God for forgiveness for their many shortcomings and for daily strength, and then leave their case with God. God loves to hear them pray.

More Than a Duty

The Bible not only encourages us to pray, but commands it. "Men ought always to pray," says the Saviour, "and not to faint." Luke 18:1. This makes prayer a Christian duty that should on no account be neglected.

But to the true Christian, prayer is more than a duty: it is a high and blessed privilege. Paul speaks of love as a duty when he says, "So ought men to love their wives." Ephesians 5:28. There is indeed an "ought" phase to love as there is to prayer. But in both cases the privilege phase far exceeds the duty aspect. No man who truly loves his wife considers it his duty to do so. To him it is not a duty or a task; it is a privilege.

There are some vital questions that come to mind as we consider prayer. Some doubt that prayer accomplishes anything aside from the reflex influence it has on the one who prays. Does prayer ever change the mind of God and make Him alter His intent? Are answers to prayer only wishful thinking? Is prayer effective in the field of bodily infirmities? Is anyone ever healed of organic difficulty? Are souls saved because we pray? Is real communion with God possible? We shall consider these and other questions as we proceed. It is time that we face the subject of prayer realistically. This we shall do.

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5

The Nature of Prayer

WE ARE persuaded that many expect from prayer that which God did not intend they should get. With their immature and even distorted view of prayer's purpose, they become discouraged when prayer fails to come up to their expectations. They crave great and immediate results, and when these are not promptly forthcoming, they are disappointed and tend to lose faith. For their sake, and for ours, we need a better understanding of what prayer can and cannot do.

The particular field in which prayer operates and to which it is limited is as definitely fixed as that of any other of the gifts of God. Grace has a vital place in God's plan, but it must work in harmony with law lest it trespass and enter a field not its own. Mercy operates under definite rules and conditions, as does forgiveness. Faith and works occupy a field where they have jurisdiction, and they must remain there, or conflict will result. Likewise prayer has its assigned sphere. While the full discussion of this is reserved for later chapters, we shall here make a few observations in regard to some of the common misconceptions of prayer.

Prayer is not primarily a short cut whereby Christians

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may obtain freely that for which others must work. I need a certain sum of money and ask God for it. I doubt not that God *could* supply this money direct from heaven, nor do I doubt that God *would* do this if I really needed the money and there was no other way of getting it. God did a miracle for Christ once when He needed a coin to pay the temple tax. Matthew 17:24-27. But this is not God's ordinary way of working. The Lord gives "thee power to get wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:18); that is, He will supply the power, but we are to work for it.

It was on this same principle that God supplied manna from heaven for Israel. Said God, "I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather." Exodus 16:4. The Lord supplied the manna; but Israel had to gather it. This is how God works today. He supplies the rain and the sunshine, and causes the seed to grow; but man must plow, cultivate, and harvest.

If a request for money should come before God and we were able to hear the response, it would probably seem a disappointing one—at least to some. He might say, "Dear one, your prayer has been recorded, and I am sympathetic with you. I could send the money you need; but that would not be the best thing to do. I suggest that you follow the usual routine; work hard, and save. In the beginning I gave Adam work to do, because it was best for him. Genesis 3:19. I give you the same counsel. I will help you. I will stand by you. I will prosper you if you work hard and do not forget God's part of your earnings. But do not build your life on the proposition of receiving money from heaven."

Such an answer might seem cold and even cruel, especially to one who expects God to hand out money on demand. But God knows best; and there are few cases on record where God has answered otherwise. Let no

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one misunderstand. God will send every angel in heaven to the aid of one who is in need of help. Let him but call on God, and the answer will come.

Prayer for the Removal of Pain

I have a severe pain, and I ask God to remove it. He may do so if He thinks best, or He may let it remain, as in the case of Paul who had "a thorn in the flesh" and asked God to remove it. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice," he says, "that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12: 8, 9. God loved Paul, and Paul loved God. Yet God did not remove the malady, but gave Paul grace and strength to bear it.

When we ask God to remove pain, it is well that we have Paul's case in mind. For reasons we do not know, God may think it best to let the pain remain, and if so, all we can do is to ask God for grace to bear it. We have a right to pray, however. Paul prayed three times, as did Christ in Gethsemane. But if, after searching our hearts and dedicating all to God, asking that His will be done, we receive no favorable answer, we may conclude that God has some other plan for us, and we may pray as did Paul, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Acts 9:6.

God may know of reasons why it is not best for Him to answer favorably a petition for relief from pain. That reason may be hid from us; but it will be revealed to us if we truly seek God and want to know His plan for us. God may answer: "Dear one, I know you are suffering, and I feel with you. I would gladly take away this pain if this were the best thing to do. But before doing this, I need your co-operation. If you should search your heart you might find that there are reasons why you suffer. You

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are not careful in your manner of living, in your eating and drinking, in work, rest, and recreation. You need to make some radical changes, and if you do, the pain will disappear. If you do all you can, I will help you. But it is necessary that you mend your ways. If you do not, and I should heal you, in a very short time you would again be where you are now. So, repent of your bodily sins as well as those of the heart. I will stand by you, and as we work together we will succeed."

This also may seem cruel comfort and cold advice, and some may think that God is not merciful. But good sense will confirm that prayer should not cover violations of the laws of health. Prayer is not to be used as a means to avoid the result of transgression. Someone has said, "Divine wisdom has given us prayer, not as a means of obtaining the good things of earth, but as a means whereby we learn to do without them; not as a means to escape evil, but as a means whereby we may become strong to meet it."

Prayer for a Conversion

If I should pray God to convert my unbelieving neighbor, He might well answer, "I will do what I can. But I must have your co-operation. What your neighbor needs is a demonstration of true religion in action. He does not believe that Christianity is of any special value. He sees little difference in the life of a believer and that of an unbeliever. If he could be convinced that Christianity really does something for a man, he would become interested. Do your best to convince him that Christianity has done something for you. Be kind, courteous, helpful. Do not irritate him with pious platitudes. Your life will preach better than your words. Be upright in all your dealings. Be fair, just, accommodating. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. Keep your house and your

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premises in order. Teach obedience to your children. If you will do this, I will be in a better position to help you answer your prayer. I need a man to whom I can point as an example of what Christianity is and what religion can do. Without such, I can do but little. Try this plan. I will help you. You are the man I want. As we work together, we may win your neighbor."

God is now looking for men such as Job, and He will find them in the last generation. When Satan sneeringly asks, "Where are those that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus?" God will quietly answer, "Here they are." "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12. Satan will then get permission to test them, as he did Job; he will do his best to get them to fall. When at last he retires defeated and God stands justified, it will be because the saints have demonstrated that they serve God as a matter of principle and not for reward.

God uses every opportunity to enlist our help in the salvation of man. As a mother permits her little ones to help her, though they are more of a hindrance than a help, so God allows us to help Him. Whenever God can, He calls on us to assist, and gives us the credit.

An Ethiopian on his way home from Jerusalem was sitting in his chariot reading a portion of the book of Isaiah. He did not understand what he was reading, and he desired help. God could have sent an angel, but instead He commanded Philip to "go near, and join thyself to this chariot." Acts 8:29. Philip did so; he explained the scripture, and the man was baptized. Verses 37, 38. Philip evidently was anxious to go on other missionary endeavors, therefore the Spirit of the Lord took him away, and "Philip was found at Azotus." Verses 39, 40. Here was perfect co-operation between God and man.

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God gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream, and He could as easily have given him the interpretation. But He called upon Daniel to give the interpretation. This made Daniel renowned in all the realm as a wise man, and as a result he became "ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon." Daniel 2:48. God did the work; Daniel got the credit. Daniel understood this and gave God the glory. Nebuchadnezzar did not understand, took the glory to himself, and suffered the penalty. Daniel 2:27-30; 4:28-33.

These considerations and examples make it plain that God desires our co-operation, and that He is handicapped when He does not get it. He is anxious for us to become His colaborers, and as we do, He prospers and blesses. We may not expect favorable answers to our prayers unless we are willing to do our share of the work; but when we in faith and humility associate ourselves with Him, the reward is great.

Let us therefore repeat that God does not respond to our prayers unless we are willing to do our share. God has no intention of helping a lazy man or one who expects to get something from God without working for it. We are to work and pray as well as to watch and pray. Prayer, as well as faith, without works is dead.

Nature's Laws

These laws are not written laws, but rather denote events in nature which have been observed to occur with unvarying uniformity under the same conditions. In a certain sense these laws may be considered as God's laws, for the Creator who made nature also set forth the laws of nature under which all things, animate and inanimate, function. A water lily will flourish in a stagnant pool, where a rose will die. Fishes prosper in water, while land

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animals die if submerged. Plants will thrive in proper soil; in other soil they wither. These properties were implanted by the Creator in the beginning, and they still hold.

Even insensate objects appear to be under law. A timber of given dimensions will carry a certain load, and so will another timber of the same kind under like conditions. Increase the dimensions, and their load-carrying capacity will increase in a definite ratio. A steel cable has a certain tensile strength, and this strength varies with the dimensions of the cable, again with a definite ratio. Men have discovered what the ratio is, and have made up tables showing this. Every builder and structural engineer carries such a book of tables with him and depends on its accuracy. Without such uniformity confusion would result.

Even prayer must conform to law to be effective. Law, being the will of God, is supreme. All must bow to it. The earth beneath and the heavens above bear witness to the faithfulness of God. Let everyone who prays join God respecting law, and let him not ask God to violate any law in order to answer his prayer. Men may at times wish to have the law of gravitation temporarily suspended, or desire to have a moratorium on the law which says that as a man sows, so also shall he reap. Such prayers are in vain.

A Brighter Picture

This may seem a dark picture; for how can any man escape if he is amenable to law in which there is no pardon and which accepts no excuse? But there is a brighter picture. There is hope for the transgressor. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,

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and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:3, 4.

What the law could not do, God did. He provided a way of escape. He could not abrogate the law, but He could heal the wound that transgression had made. And this He did by sending His Son. By His wounds we are healed.

We have a faint picture of redemption and restoration in nature. In war, man may ruin a landscape and leave it in total devastation. But in a few years that same field presents a glorious view covered with poppies. An animal may be severely wounded, but it will lick its sores and start the healing process. A tree may be severely slashed by the ax, but it will do its best to cover the wound and is often remarkably successful. There are healing processes in nature which tend to repair any damage done. This is indicative of God's provision for man. The human race is not left to die alone because of transgression. Help is near. And God has means at hand to accomplish His design. He need not abolish any law in order to bring relief. Rather, He honors the law.

I never cease to marvel at the airplane. I see men load into the baggage compartment all kinds of luggage and heavy boxes. Then the passengers board the plane. I am convinced that the plane will never leave the ground; for have I not been taught that only a substance lighter than air can of itself rise from the ground? And the plane does not meet this specification.

But the plane rises. A miracle? No, only the application of other laws, laws of construction, of wing surface, of speed, which take precedence of the first law without abrogating it.

I know that a piece of iron will not float on water.

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I make a demonstration to prove my point. The iron promptly disappears under the surface. I am correct. Iron will not float.

But a man comes along. "Change the shape of your piece of iron, and it will float," he says. I do so. I make of it a little vessel, a hollowed-out vessel, of the precise weight of my original piece that would not float; and, lo, it floats! A miracle? No, a simple application of the law of displacement. And then I wonder: If man by a change of the shape of an object can make iron float, may not God have a thousand ways of accomplishing His ends? God has, and He does not violate law to do so.

It is said of Columbus that at a banquet in his honor some persons made light of his discovery of America. Anybody could discover America. Just get in a boat and keep on going west, and there would be America!

Quietly Columbus handed an egg to one of his detractors and asked him if he could balance it on end. The man tried, but did not succeed. Handing the egg back to Columbus, he asked, "Can you do it?" Columbus took the egg, set it down hard on the table, cracking the shell, and the egg stood. "Well, it is easy enough to do it that way," said the detractor. "Yes," answered Columbus, "it is easy enough to do it if you know how." The onlookers saw the point.

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." 2 Peter 2:9. Without doing violence to the meaning of the text, we may well use only the four first words, "The Lord knoweth how." What seems to us to be a miracle may not be a miracle from God's viewpoint. It may merely be an application of laws of which we are ignorant. In any event, the Lord knows how.

I stand appalled as I consider what God wants me to be, and the standard I must reach. I am convinced that there

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is no hope for me. But when I turn to God, I find One who knows how to deliver me, help me, and make me stand. I claim the promise, "He shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand." Romans 14:4. I read: "Take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Ephesians 6:13. I do not see how it can be done. But God knows how. As clay in the hands of the potter, so God can form us into a vessel of honor, if we will let Him. The motto, "Prayer changes things," may well be revised, "God changes things."

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6

Prayer for the Beginner

THERE are doubtless those among the readers who have had little practice in prayer and who do not know the proper way to approach God. Some still remember their childhood prayers and use them; but these prayers do not always fit present conditions.

The first time I became seriously interested in religion, I with others faced the problem of prayer. I had heard a minister mention that Christ prayed all night, and though he did not suggest that others should do this, I drew the conclusion that all-night praying would be pleasing to God and deserving of a reward. I knew that I could not pray all night every night, but I might try it for one night. And so I attempted to do this.

My idea of prayer was to ask God for the things I wanted, and I thought that if I prayed long enough and earnestly enough, I would get my desire. God was a kind father, who sat in heaven and watched us, and if we boys behaved and were good we would get a reward. As I had been good for several weeks I was sure that God would hear me and grant my request.

So one night I started praying, intending to continue all night. There were not many things I wanted,—I

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thought I would be somewhat modest, at least to begin with,—and so my prayer was rather short, and I had soon said everything on my mind. What more was there to do? I could repeat what I had already said, but there seemed no special point to that. And how could I keep that up all night? I knew that ministers repeated in their sermons, but they used slightly different words each time, and I did not have those extra words. All I needed was a few minutes for my prayer, and I was done.

It did not take me long to conclude that it was not for me to pray all night. How could I find words to continue even one hour, much less all night? I decided that I needed a better education and a larger vocabulary if I were to pray for any length of time. I doubt that I spent as much as ten minutes in this first "night" of prayer. My prayer experience did not have a very promising beginning.

Wrong Conception of Prayer

The reader will immediately discern that I had a wrong conception of prayer. All-night prayer to me meant that I had to talk all night. Was not prayer talking to God, informing Him of conditions in general and of my own in particular? Was it not my duty to remind Him of what He should do, and make sure that He remembered what I had told Him before, but which He might have forgotten? Apparently God did forget things that I remembered. Had I not spoken to Him of many things and received no answer? I repeatedly asked Him to bless and protect my brother, and then my brother fell down and broke a leg! Surely God had forgotten what I asked Him to do.

I need not say that this was a disheartening experience and an unsatisfactory beginning for prayer. Every evening I would talk to God and get no response. Perhaps

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God had not heard me at all. Perhaps I was too insignificant for God to notice. Perhaps I didn't count.

I thought God ought to hear me and make some kind of response; but He didn't. What could I do to make God take notice of me? I remembered how in school unruly students received more attention than the good ones who behaved. Perhaps I had been too good, and that was why God let me alone. If I did something bad, God might see it and do something.

I tried this in a small way, but God still ignored me. What more could I do? As far as God was concerned, I simply did not exist. I was too unimportant, too small for God to bother with.

This state of things continued for some time. I finally decided that if God ignored me, in retaliation I would ignore Him. And I did. But that did not remedy matters. I tried still to be some kind of Christian, but I felt that I was not getting any help or encouragement from God. He simply let me alone. And so I prayed only when I was in dire need.

Then came the awakening—not in an abrupt way, not by an angel coming down from heaven, or by an arresting light at noonday, but simply by studying the word of God, and by association with a man of God, one of my own fellow believers. I had watched him as he was preaching, and I felt instinctively that he had something I did not have. But as I had been disappointed in God, so I had also been in men; and I was certain that though a man might make a good appearance in the pulpit, he was "good" merely because I did not know him well enough. If I should live with him, I would soon discover that he was no better than others. All men I had known before had feet of clay.

In the providence of God, as I now believe, I had the

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opportunity of becoming well acquainted with him, of living with him. And, without going into detail, which would serve no purpose in this connection, I found him to be a true man of God, a man of prayer and of power. I saw prayers fulfilled before my eyes, undeniable cases of instant healing. This man lived in pain, and at times in outright agony, but with never a murmuring word. I tested him; I tried him; and he stood the test. Through him my faith in God was restored, faith in a prayer-hearing God. It was not his words that convinced me; it was his life.

While I shall ever be grateful for the help I thus received, it was not any man who taught me to pray. This was a gradual process as I began studying the Bible. Little by little, light dawned on me, and I began to understand the meaning and purpose of prayer. God ceased to be the kind of Santa Claus God I had conceived Him to be, and instead became a Father and a Friend with whom I could commune and counsel. I still needed to pray and thank God for daily bread, but I found that I needed counsel and spiritual guidance even more, and that God was abundantly willing to supply this also. It is hoped that the reader will experience the blessing and comfort that there is in real prayer, which in essence is fellowship and companionship with the Almighty.

Beginning to Pray

How, then, do we begin to pray? What do we say, what do we do? We know of no better or more simple, yet complete, prayer than that which Christ put in the mouth of the publican who stood alone and did not even dare to raise his face to heaven, but said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Luke 18:13. The prayer was effective, for Christ tells us that "this man went down to his house justified."

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Verse 14. We may therefore accept those seven words as the ideal prayer for one who seeks God, perhaps for the first time.

There are two couplets in this prayer that make it full and complete: God, merciful—me, sinner. The publican asked for mercy, knowing himself a sinner. He did not ask for justice: that would bring him face to face with the law, and "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." Romans 3:20. The man did not parade his goodness or his wickedness; he simply asked for mercy. He made no excuse of any kind; he knew that God knew. And his plea for mercy, which came from an honest heart, was heard. No man who prays this publican prayer with a sincere desire to do God's will, need fear that he will be turned away. Like the publican he will go to his house justified. God hears such prayers.

Let the beginner who has never prayed before, or who has been disappointed in prayer, repeat from the heart these seven words: "God be merciful to me a sinner." Let him in all humility and faith come before God, and God will hear. The beginner must have faith to believe the promise: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9.

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6. There is one "must" in this quotation, or rather two, for "must" belongs equally to both statements; the first, "that He is;" and the second, "that He is a rewarder." Both of these statements are "musts." One who prays must believe that God exists—for what use would it be to pray to a nonexistent God? He must also believe that God is a rewarder of them that seek Him; that is, that God takes

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notice of those who pray, and rewards them according to their faith. God is not morally indifferent. He knows what goes on in the world, and rewards, or does not reward, as He sees best.

We suggest that the beginner in Christ ponder the prayer of the publican. As he utters this prayer he will search his heart and weigh his motives. He will come to the conclusion that there is hope for him only in the mercy of God, and he grasps by faith the promise that God will forgive if he confesses. And so he confesses. He does not use a set form of words. He pours out his heart to God as to a father, and as by faith he accepts the promise of the Lord that He will forgive and cleanse from all unrighteousness, he feels the burden roll off, and he claims the blessed promise to all who believe, that God will "abundantly pardon." Isaiah 55:7.

Let the reader who has not yet taken this first step hasten to do so. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Verses 6, 7.

This is the first step in coming to God, the first step in conversion. Let the inquiring soul take this step, and God will lead him on.

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7

Does God Change?

DOES God change His purposes or His plans because men pray? Is anything at all changed because men desire to have them changed? These are serious questions, and they demand a serious answer.

It cannot be conceived that God, who from eternity has had a plan to which He is working, should change that plan or purpose because man wants it changed. "Like the stars in the vast circuit of their appointed path, God's purposes know no haste and no delay."—*The Desire of Ages,* page 32. "Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned; all things are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best."—*The Ministry of Healing,* page 417.

In view of these statements some will immediately conclude that prayer does not and cannot accomplish anything. If God orders that which He sees is best; if His purposes know no haste or delay, man can no more change God's purposes than he can change the stars in their appointed path. Therefore, what use is prayer?

It is clear that God would not encourage us to pray and promise to answer, if nothing was accomplished by prayer.

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The statement is clear: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16. Just what does it avail?

In apostolic days prayer availed much. The lame were healed; the blind had their sight restored; the lepers were cleansed; the paralytics had the use of their limbs restored; even the dead were raised. Acts 3:1-8; Matthew 9:27-31; Luke 7:22, 12-15. In view of God's readiness to help us in answer to prayer, we are exhorted to seek the Lord while He may be found (Isaiah 55:6); to ask, seek, and know (Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9); to watch and pray (Matthew 26:41); always to pray (Luke 18:1); to pray that we may be accounted worthy to escape (Luke 21:36); to pray with all prayer, and supplication, and thanksgiving (Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6); to continue in prayer (Colossians 4:2); to pray for all men (1 Timothy 2:1); to pray everywhere (verse 8).

If we therefore are asked if prayer changes God, we would answer that prayer does not and is not intended to cause any change in God. His purpose is not changed. There are times when He may have alternate ways of working or may permit a certain choice of procedure, as in the case of David where He gave him a choice of three kinds of punishment because of his transgression: seven years of famine; three months of defeat in battle; three days of pestilence. 2 Samuel 24:12-14. God's purpose was not changed though David repented; but the king did have a choice of punishment.

Men Are Changed

If we were asked if prayer does not change anything we would definitely assert that prayer changes things, that prayer moves the arm of Omnipotence, that prayer can move mountains, clear away difficulties, heal the sick,

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change the entire course of a man's life, and even change history.

There are those who believe—and Christians among them—that prayer is primarily a means of getting something out of God, which He may hesitate to give, but which persistent prayer will effect. In support of this view they cite the account of the importunate widow who wearied the judge to the extent that he at last gave her what she desired, for no other reason than that she annoyed him. Luke 18:1-8. In like manner they believe that if they pray long enough, God will grant their request. They forget that the parable was given not to show what God is like, but what God is *not* like. God does not give men what they ask because they pray long.

Prayer is not primarily to get from God what a man wants, but rather to make man satisfied with what he has. It is not necessarily to relieve him from pain, but to give him grace to bear it; it is not to attempt to have God change His mind, but to have man accept God's mind. Prayer is not an endeavor to outline some plan of action for God to follow, but to ascertain what God's plan is and acquiesce in it; it is not to ask that God's will be *changed,* but that God's will be *done.* The chief aim of prayer is for the supplicant to come so completely into harmony with God that God's will becomes his.

If the real purpose of prayer is to bring a person into harmony with God, what has thereby been accomplished?

1. The man is now a partner with God and ready to co-operate with Him in whatever God wants done.

2. His mind has been taken from what he prayed for to something better. He has almost forgotten what he was so intent upon getting, and is now occupied with what God wants him to do.

3. He has learned what Paul did when he said, "I have

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learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Philippians 4:11. Before, he fretted; now, he is content. He knows that he is in God's hand, that God is working out His plan with him, and that all things will work together for good.

4. He has learned to trust God fully, and has discovered that answer to prayer is not a problem to him any more. *All* his prayers are answered according to the promise, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Mark 11:24. A true Christian will ask of God only that which God wants him to have; his will is God's will, and he asks that God's will be done; hence, whatever he asks, he will get. He is in close touch with God, and sensitive to God's will.

Prayer is that simple. Learn to harmonize with God; attempt to ascertain His will. As soon as you have done this, your problem is solved. You may then ask for whatever you want, and expect to get it; for you will want and ask only for that which is in harmony with God's will, something He wants you to have. You will in all sincerity and simplicity inquire as did Paul, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Acts 9:6. And God will make plain what He wants you to do. You will not continually be imploring God to do *your* will. You will leave the matter with God and be content. Christ was so sure that the believing suppliant would receive a favorable answer to his request that He could assure His disciples, "If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Matthew 21:21, 22.

Such answer to prayer can be true only where the one who prays is so completely in harmony with God that his

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will and God's are one. It was on this principle that Elijah worked when he suddenly appeared before Ahab and declared, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." 1 Kings 17:1.

Elijah's Attitude in Prayer

Elijah would never have dared use such language had he not had a previous understanding with God that He would support and confirm his word. God empowered Elijah to speak as he did, doubtless to enhance the prestige of His prophet, as would be the case when his prophecy came true.

As a result of lack of rain, a famine arose, and Ahab commanded that Elijah be found. When they met, Ahab accused Elijah of being the cause of the famine. Elijah answered that the real cause was Ahab himself in that he had forsaken God. He then took charge of the situation and commanded Ahab to gather all the prophets of Baal and Astarte together. Ahab would not have heeded Elijah's command had he not already been impressed with Elijah's authority. It is noteworthy that when God told Elijah to call Ahab, God said, "Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth." 1 Kings 18:1.

After the test on the mount had been completed, and it was time for the rain to come, Elijah prayed for it as if he were responsible for its coming. Seven times he prayed, and then the rain came. Verses 42-45.

This story of Elijah illustrates what Jesus meant when He said, "Ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree," but "greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father." Matthew 21:21; John 14:12. To shut up heaven for three years was a greater miracle than causing a fig tree to wither and die.

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We have no reason to believe that God at this time will cause mountains to be thrown into the sea at the command of a man. Nor do we in the least doubt that God could do this if the occasion called for it. Christ uses this extreme illustration to buttress His word that God will confirm what He has said, that "all things are possible to him that believeth." Mark 9:23.

Purpose of Prayer

In summing up what has been said in this chapter, we reach these conclusions: Prayer is not intended to procure for us the things we want from God. Prayer is primarily the way to bring us into harmony with God, so that His will and ours will be one. When this is brought about, peace and contentment will come to the soul. There is no longer any anxious pleading with God that He do our will, but a willing conformity on our part to accept whatever He sees is best for us. We will continue to pray as we have done before, but "our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God, as we would talk with a friend." And the conversation will not all be on our part; "He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet, joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch." —*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 129.

In this sweet communion which may be ours, we do not keep asking for things any more than we would of an earthly friend. We are talking with God, telling Him our joys and sorrows, and getting from Him the counsel we need and the blessed assurance that He loves us.

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8

Watch and Pray

WHILE we are admonished repeatedly in the Bible to pray, we are also counseled to watch. Matthew 24:42; 25:13; Mark 13:35. The reason given is: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

To watch in the sense here used, is more than merely being awake. It means to be alert, to scan eagerly, to observe in order to look after, protect, or guard.

With many the word "watch" has lost its original meaning and has almost become synonymous with prayer. Hence the hour of prayer is often called "the watch hour," and the morning watch has become the same as the morning prayer. To this there is no objection, unless we fail to give watching an equal importance with prayer. There is danger lest, forgetting that watching and praying go together, we pray, but neglect to watch. Both have equal claims upon us.

In the texts mentioned above, "watch" has special reference to watching for the signs of the Lord's coming. This is most important, but the warning includes more than this. We are to watch lest we enter into temptation. Matthew 26:41. Satan has many ways of catching his

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prey, and we are to be fully awake and alert, or we may be caught in his snare. It is not enough to ask God to protect us and shield us from danger. We must take proper precautions ourselves. It should be known that faith in God is not inconsistent with doing all we can to help ourselves.

Young and old need to be on their guard. They should not ask God to do for them what He expects them to do for themselves. Lack of understanding of God's method of work has brought confusion and defeat to many. There are some things God expects us to do, and when we do our part, He will do His. God may send bread from heaven,—and will do so if needed,—but ordinarily we must work for it. God gives sunshine and rain, but we must sow the seed and do the harvesting.

Co-operation With God

Many Christians have been drilled in the belief that God does it all and that there is nothing for them to do but be pliant and submissive, and God will do the rest.

From one viewpoint this is true, but from another it is not. There are many things God cannot do without our help, and He asks for our full co-operation. Christ says, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." John 15:4. But it is just as true that the vine cannot bear fruit without the branches. There is an interdependence between the branches and the vine that makes it necessary for both to work together. We cannot be separated from the source of spiritual power and live.

We say this in all reverence and only for the purpose of pointing out the necessity for our working together with God. For we well know that our part is only that of a willing medium who of himself can do nothing.

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Such sayings as "Fear God and take your own part," "Fear God and keep your powder dry," "God helps those who help themselves," are at times used to belittle God. However, there is a certain amount of truth in them. God wants us to put our trust in Him, but not with our hands folded. If I am in financial straits, am I to call upon God for help, but do nothing to help myself? I seek God for health. Does this release me from being careful in my habits that I might glorify God in my body? I ask God to protect me from danger. Does that permit me to ignore a red traffic light? I am shipwrecked and about to sink. Shall I refuse the rope that is thrown to me? I pray God to protect me from accidents. I pray God to save me from temptation. Shall I then walk right into it, trusting God to save me? I fully believe that God can save me from my own folly if I transgress unknowingly; but I have no right to expect Him to perform a miracle when I insist on transgressing. God *can* save me if I ignorantly transgress; but if I deliberately drink poison I may expect to reap the consequences.

Watch and Pray

Therefore we are not only to pray, but to watch. We are to be on the alert for danger and take no unnecessary risk. While we are not to be suspicious of everyone and everything, we are to have our eyes open at all times. In the days of Nehemiah when the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt and the enemies of God's people did all they could to hinder the work and there was constant danger of attack, the record reads: "They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, everyone with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon." Nehemiah 4:17. These men trusted in God, but they also watched. With all con-

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fidence they said, "Our God shall fight for us," but that did not hinder them from having weapons ready for an emergency.

God commands us to watch and pray, for the two go together. From the beginning it was God's plan to place His children in a position where they would be compelled to watch. That is why He placed the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. Had there been no tree there, Adam and Eve could have roamed the garden with never a thought of being careful where they went. The placing of the tree and the command not to eat of it, made it necessary for them to be on the watch. Had they watched and not gone near the tree, there would have been no temptation. Failure to watch caused the first sin.

It is well to shield children from temptation and from the sight of evil up to a certain age. But it is not well to make all decisions for them to the point where they are not compelled to make a decision and a choice for themselves. The time will come when as they grow up they will meet evil face to face. They should be prepared for such a time and not be left to meet temptation alone with no one to help. Under wise guidance, controlled experiments should be performed that would make them acquainted with certain situations and conditions and prepare them for the tests that of necessity will come. If they have not seen evil, if they have never been instructed to watch for its first innocent appearance, they may be taken unawares and caught in a snare that may have serious consequences.

Evil does not always appear repulsive at first sight. What could be more attractive than an artistically lighted room, beautiful music, and young, lithe bodies swaying in rhythmic motions as they dance upon the polished

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floor? To innocent eyes it does not appear wicked, and they reason that it certainly can do no harm. They do not know that there may be the beginning of a train of events that lead to blasted lives, unhappiness, divorce, insane asylums, homes for the incurables, and a pauper's grave.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil had every appearance of being a good tree. Eve could see nothing evil in it, and the fruit was inviting. But in the eating of that fruit was wrapped up murder in the next generation, and in seven generations the corruption of the whole earth.

I have seen children permitted to run wild until they feared neither God nor man. I have seen other children who were shielded from every temptation, but who, as soon as they were relieved from parental restraint, plunged into all manner of evil, largely because they were never permitted to face temptation under wise guidance. The parents of today need to be remembered in prayer; they need to pray themselves, for they are facing a task that is too great for human wisdom. Divine wisdom is needed to discern the line of distinction between unbridled liberty and wise restraint. Somewhere along the line, opportunity should be given young people for self-directed endeavor, for a natural introduction to the complexities of modern society, so that when they leave school or home they will be able to face life with some knowledge of the problems they will meet. They should not be asked to meet these conditions unprepared. Parents and educators should give careful study to their responsibilities, lest they send into the world young people who may have a good technical education, but who are totally unprepared for life.

The admonition to watch has many applications. We

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are to watch our religious experience, for there is constant danger that we drift away from the old moorings. We are to watch the signs of the times, or we may find ourselves out of step with the opening providences of God. We are to watch our words, appearance, associations, recreations, habits, readings, Bible study, church attendance, financial dealings, and our account with God. There is no phase of life that we can safely omit.

As we watch we will discover dangers from within and without. Watching reveals these dangers to us, and prayer reveals the remedy. There are no circumstances under which we may not breathe a prayer; for prayer is an atmosphere rather than an appointed time and place.

Many things are going on in this world of which we are but dimly aware. In the air outside my window—and inside also—there are millions and millions of words and pictures flying around looking for a place to land and be transformed into audible words and visible images. They are as yet only electrical impulses, and how they ever become anything else I do not know. I see nothing as I look out; I hear nothing, but by turning a little knob on my instrument I can prove their existence. Suddenly the room is filled with music, and pictures appear. I see the President addressing a large gathering, and I hear him speak. I see the coronation taking place in England, and I hear the words of allegiance from those who kneel before the queen. I hear the explosion of a bomb thousands of miles away, and I hear and see the percussion. And I wonder, is there any good ground for not believing that the God who made all things may have a machine better than anything man has made that will record not only our words, but our thoughts, our intentions, and visibly reproduce every act of our lives? In view of what men can do, prayer becomes a reasonable possibility, and the

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advice to watch and pray is a sensible and reasonable request.

I am rolling along in my car on an excellent highway The weather is perfect, and there is no other car in sight. It is perfectly safe to exceed the speed limit,—no police are in sight,—and so I go sixty, seventy, eighty miles and all is well. But a mile farther on I am stopped and charged with speeding. Who saw me? Nobody followed me. But then I am confronted with a radar report! And there is the picture of the car and the speed noted electrically. Radar is no respector of persons. Its report is correct, and I am caught.

I need to be careful. I may think nobody is looking and I can safely transgress; but somebody *is* looking. God has a radar whose testimony I cannot gainsay. So I must watch, whether I see anybody watching me or not. I must watch for my own sake, watch for the sake of those who trust me. I must watch and pray.

I was discussing this in class once, and a student spoke up: "Well, if God has a radar, then I am sunk." The class period had not been in vain.

As God's watchmen, the ministry has a special responsibility. Says God: "I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at My mouth, and warn them from Me." "If the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand." Ezekiel 33:7, 6.

Personal Responsibility

The watchman's responsibility does not, however, relieve an individual from his personal responsibility. Christ,

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speaking to the disciples, said: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Mark 13:35-37.

While God thus holds the watchmen responsible, the Christian must also watch himself. Says Paul, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." 2 Corinthians 13:5. This means that each one must faithfully look into his own heart and attempt to discover whether he be in the faith. This entails more than examining certain doctrines to see if he is in harmony with them. It is more than adherence to a creed. It means first of all that a man must face himself with the question, Am I a Christian? Am I truly converted? Have I turned my back on the world? Am I a new creature in Christ Jesus? Am I an overcomer, or am I constantly being overcome? These are the questions that count. And high position or great learning do not come into the reckoning. We shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Such an honest self-examination will reveal weaknesses and faults that must be remedied. But no one need be discouraged though he finds himself far below the standard set by God, and even below the standard he has set for himself. Hear Paul's confession: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:12-14.

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Paul was a good man, consecrated and honest; but he confesses that he had not already attained, that he was not already perfect, that he had not yet apprehended. But this did not discourage him. He was determined to "follow after," to reach "forth unto those things which are before," and "press toward the mark for the prize."

Paul's experience should be an encouragement to all who with him have been pressing toward the mark, but who have found that they have come short and have not already attained or are already perfect. The un-Biblical "holiness" doctrine that is popularly preached may have done some good, but it has done much more harm. Were Paul now living, the believers in "holiness" would roundly rebuke him for recording his experience as in the quoted statements above.

Such an inventory as Paul made of himself, every Christian should make. He will discover his shortcomings and his sins, but he will not become discouraged. With Paul he will "follow after," and at last win the prize.

When we stated above that the chief problem of being true Christians cannot be determined by adhering to certain doctrines, some may have gotten the impression that we are not interested in doctrine, and that doctrine, after all, is not important. Let us hasten to remove such an impression.

Paul admonished his hearers not to do or teach anything contrary to the doctrine which they had learned. Romans 16:17. He had a definite "form of doctrine" which he delivered to them and which they obeyed. Romans 6:17. It appears from this wording that Paul had arranged a "form of doctrine" which he delivered to the church at Rome, and that they had accepted it and "obeyed from the heart." Some apparently had deviated from the "form" which Paul had given the churches, so

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he sent Timothy to stay at Ephesus and to "charge some that they teach no other doctrine." 1 Timothy 1:3. His counsel to Timothy was, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." 1 Timothy 4:16. And in the last letter Paul wrote to Timothy before his death, he again referred to doctrine, saying to Timothy, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine." 2 Timothy 3:10. Having fully indoctrinated Timothy, Paul could safely leave him in charge, knowing that he would see to it "that they teach no other doctrine" than that which Paul taught. In this view of doctrine John joins Paul when he says, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed." 2 John 9, 10.

In view of these statements, how can anyone think lightly of doctrine? When we are invited to examine ourselves whether we are in the faith, this faith may well include "the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12.

While there must always be liberty to differ on minor points, there must be unanimity on the great doctrines of the Bible held by the church.

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9

Prayer and Meditation

PRAYER is to the spiritual man what breath is to the physical. No one can long survive without breathing; and no Christian will long continue as a Christian without prayer. There are individuals who are physically weak for no other reason than lack of life-giving air. If they would but open the windows and inhale God's free gift they might be well. But they continue to breathe stale, vitiated, and contaminated air and are slowly dying without knowing the cause. Renewed life might freely be theirs for the taking.

In the same manner some Christians are dying for lack of the life-giving breath of prayer. If they would but open their windows to heaven and draw deep breaths, their whole being would become invigorated, and new vitality and spiritual health would come to them.

Some persons neglect to pray because they have had an unsatisfactory experience with prayer. They have prayed, but God has not seemed to take any interest in them. With David they say, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? why art Thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season,

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and am not silent." Psalm 22:1, 2. They wonder if God has forsaken them and if it were better to cease praying. Their experience with prayer, their whole Christian experience, is unsatisfying. What are they to do?

Let such souls read and heed the following scripture: "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips: when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches." Psalm 63:5, 6.

Note the glorious promise, "My soul shall be satisfied." This is exactly what these dear souls desire and what they are anxiously waiting for. They have prayed, and again and again they have hoped that God in some way would manifest Himself; but He seems to have forgotten them. So they pray again and again for years, but still no result. A few times they have had a taste of the joy that might be theirs, but it was only momentarily, and again they were left to grope their way. For them there is no balm in Gilead.

Now comes the joyful news that it is possible to find satisfaction in prayer. "My soul shall be satisfied." But how? Immediately follows the answer, "When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches."

Meditation is the better part of prayer. In prayer we speak to God; in meditation God speaks to us. Not until we have learned the secret of waiting upon God will we enjoy the sweet communion that God reserves for those who wait upon Him. When we have learned it, the promise that we shall be satisfied will be fulfilled.

Note the reading carefully: "My soul shall be satisfied . . . when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches." To this let us add two more statements: "My soul, wait thou in silence for God."

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Psalm 62:5, A.R.V. "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." Psalm 4:4.

Most Christians offer a little prayer at the bedside before retiring for the night. Having "said" their prayer they are ready for sleep. It is this little time between prayer and sleep to which the psalmist refers. He counsels us to remember God at this time, and meditate. Meditate is defined: "To think about; to contemplate; to plan, intend, purpose; to think deeply and continuously, to reflect, ponder, muse; solemn reflection on sacred matters." The psalmist calls this to "commune with your own heart upon your bed." Verse 4.

Man's Advantage

Man has this advantage over brute creation: He has the power of self-reflection and self-criticism. He can stand himself up in a corner, as it were, and examine himself. "Let a man examine himself." 1 Corinthians 11:28. "Examine yourselves; . . . prove your own selves." 2 Corinthians 13:5. This the Christian can do, and the unbeliever likewise.

The Christian can judge himself. He can do what God recommends, commune with his own heart upon his bed and think things through. Thus, when he has finished his evening prayer, instead of going to sleep immediately, let him spend a little time in self-examination and meditation.

"Amen" should not ordinarily be the end of our interview with God. When we do this, we are bidding God good night when He may not be ready to be dismissed. Saying "Amen" is "hanging up" on God, telling Him we are done, and cutting off communication. He may not think it courteous of us to talk as long as we please, and

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the moment we are done, cut off all further intercourse. We do not give Him opportunity to get in a word. Suddenly He finds Himself cut off. This cannot please God.

To avoid this embarrassment, God asks us to spend a little time in meditation. He wants us to be still and wait in silence. We might even pray as did Samuel, "Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth." 1 Samuel 3:9.

How do we commune with God? Have we not already prayed? Yes, we have prayed; and this is talking with God. But communion is more than talking. It is also listening. Of this we have done little.

The first step in communion is silence—silence in the soul, waiting upon God. "Wait thou in silence for God," we are told. You have prayed. Now you are lying upon your bed, ready to commune with your own heart. How is this done?

Consider this statement from *Christ's Object Lessons,* page 129:

"If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life. Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God, as we would talk with a friend. He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet, joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch."

A Conversation With God

This is not an experience reserved for a few chosen ones; but is open to every Christian. Note again these soul-satisfying statements, "Often there will come to us a sweet, joyful sense of the presence of Jesus . . . as He draws nigh to *commune with us* as He did with Enoch."

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God draws near to commune with us! What higher joy can earth hold? If God has such in store for us, should we not explore the possibilities of communion?

Someone will again ask, "Just what must I do to commune with God? How do I start? Be a little more specific."

It is not for one to tell another how to pray, but here is what one did.

"Lord, I have had a hard day today."

"Yes."

"I am tired, Lord, so tired."

"Yes, I know, dear one."

"I am afraid I lost my temper today, Lord. I was so nervous and tired out."

"Yes, I know all about it. I would gladly have helped you, had you asked Me."

"Lord, will You help me tomorrow? I will have another hard day."

"I will be happy to do so. But now you must go to sleep."

"Yes, Lord, I *am* tired. But before I go to sleep, I want to tell You that I love You. You have been so wonderfully good and patient."

"Yes, dear one, I love you, too. Now go to sleep."

"Good night, Lord."

"Good night."

Isn't this merely talking to yourself? says one. It is, but it may also be much more. Note again the promise quoted above, that on such occasions there may "come to us a sweet, joyful sense of the presence of Jesus . . . as He draws night to commune with us as He did with Enoch." If there is such a possibility, can we afford to pass it by?

God has good reasons for asking us to meditate and commune with Him in silence. As we pray we often

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talk aloud. Not only does God hear what we say, but we may also believe that Satan is an interested listener. He learns much of our plans from what we tell God, and uses this information to his advantage.

In meditation it is different. As we wait upon God in silence, Satan is completely at a loss to know what is going on. He cannot read our thoughts, and though he is expert at surmising, he can never be sure. What would not Satan give to learn what God is confiding to us?

Paul was once taken to the third heaven, and there he heard unspeakable words "which it is not lawful for a man to utter." 2 Corinthians 12:2-4. The original word for "lawful" is better translated "permitted" or "with permission." In Acts 2:29 Peter says, "Let me freely speak," literally "it being permitted me to freely speak."—*Englishman's Greek Concordance,* 7th ed., p. 268. It is the same expression as when we say, "With your permission I will speak freely." In Acts 8:37 Philip's answer in reply to the eunuch's question if he might be baptized was, "Thou mayest." In Acts 21:37 Paul asks, "May I speak unto thee?" In each case it is the same word that is translated "lawful" in 2 Corinthians 12:4.

Paul was taken to the third heaven, and there certain instruction was given him which he was to keep to himself and not tell anyone. God has secrets which He reveals only to those whom He can trust and who will not talk. This is in accordance with the principle enunciated in Amos 3:7, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets." One of the first requirements of a prophet is that he will not talk without permission, that he will be able to keep a secret. God must have someone on earth to whom He can trust His secrets and who will be guided by them, but not reveal them to the enemy.

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Does this mean that we are never to pray aloud? By no means. It is well that Satan listens when we affirm our faith in God and express our determination to go forward in faith whatever hindrance may come in the way. But there are some things we ought to talk over with God alone. This we can do in meditation.

If we should ask the reader if he has ever told God that he loves Him, he would doubtless answer, "Yes, many times. I have repeatedly testified to my love for God in social meetings and on other occasions." We doubt not that this is true. But it is not to this we have reference. Have you ever, as you are lying quietly upon your bed, looked up into the face of Jesus, as it were, and told Him, "I love You." *That* is real communion. And you may even have had blessed assurance of the words, "I love you, too." Such is the kind of fellowship for which God longs as much as we.

Boldness in Prayer

It is astonishing how formal we are with God. It is well that in public worship we approach God in reverence and godly fear. But are there not times when we as His children may come boldly to the throne of grace and there find help in time of need? Are there not times when we may speak freely with Him as with a friend, informally and confidentially? Is not this what John means when he says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3.

There is a boldness that is obnoxious and out of place, and which should be condemned and avoided. But there is also a boldness which is commendable and which God encourages. It is the boldness of a child who unafraid

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approaches his father, though he be a king before whom all men bow. To the child the father is not so much a king who is to be feared, as a father who is to be loved. The child does not speak to him as a servant does with fear and trembling, but as a child who has certain rights. Christians are invited to enter with boldness the holiest of all, the throne room of God, where only the high priest formerly entered (Hebrews 10:19); we are even to have boldness in the day of judgment (1 John 4:17). It seems almost unbelievable that such can be the case. And yet boldness is necessary for sonship according to Hebrews 3:6, where "confidence" is the word, otherwise translated "boldness."

As children of God we are to come confidently to God. We are to serve Him with "reverence and godly fear," and also "hold fast the confidence [boldness] and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Hebrews 3:6. As we do this we may at last be counted among those who not only are permitted to enter the pearly gates, but who "have *right* to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Revelation 22:14.

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10

Prayer and Fasting

THERE came to Him a certain man, kneeling down to Him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to Thy disciples, and they could not cure him." Matthew 17:14-16.

The disciples had been given power to cure diseases (Luke 9:1), but here was a case in which their prayers were ineffectual. Christ promptly "rebuked the devil" and cured the child. When the disciples saw this, they asked, "Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief." Matthew 17:18-20. Then He added, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Verse 21.

Christ had healed a disease which the disciples could not cure. Always before, when they had prayed, men were healed. But prayer did not avail in this case. This kind of disease did not go out but by prayer and fasting.

This brings us face to face with the problem of fasting. For a problem it is. If God will not hear when I pray, why should He hear when I fast? Will abstinence from food accomplish what prayer cannot do?

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Many are perplexed about fasting. The church issues a call to fast, and the people fast, but are wondering what good it will do. All it seems to accomplish is to make them hungry, and perhaps irritable; they fail to see any good in that.

Some justify fasting on the ground that it is good for the body; that the mind also becomes clearer. This is doubtless the case with some; for the system might be clogged up, and fasting gives it an opportunity to dispose of accumulated surplus and give the organs a rest. But this cannot be the true reason for fasting. There must be other and weightier reasons.

"Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." Luke 4:1. Matthew adds that He was led into the wilderness "to be tempted of the devil." Matthew 4:1. Mark gives the further information that He "was with the wild beasts." Mark 1:13. This tells us that it was God's appointment for Him to go into the wilderness, that the Spirit led Him there, and that He went for the specific purpose of being "tempted of the devil."

For thirty years Jesus had lived in Nazareth under ordinary human conditions. He had met the common temptations of childhood and youth, and now He was baptized and ready to enter upon His lifework. Thus far He had fulfilled all expectations. He had lived a blameless life, and at the baptism the Father had put His stamp of approval on Him. "Coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Mark 1:10, 11. It was immediately after this that the Spirit led Him into the wilderness.

As Adam was tested in the garden, so the second Adam

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was also to be tested. But His test was to be a thousand times harder than Adam's. Adam stood in the full strength of manhood, and the test given him was the smallest conceivable. Christ's test came to Him after a grueling experience of a forty days' fast, when emaciated by lack of food He was near death's door, apparently forsaken of God and man, and His test was the hardest conceivable.

We have only a meager account of what took place during those forty days, for no human being was near to record it, and Christ has given us no information. We know that He was absorbed in His contemplation of the work before Him and the tremendous responsibilities that would be His. We know that He grew weaker day by day and that "He was afterward anhungered." We also know that "after the foe had departed, Jesus fell exhausted to the earth, with the pallor of death upon His face. . . . The angels now ministered to the Son of God as He lay like one dying."—*The Desire of Ages,* page 131. The Bible briefly states that after the tempter left Him, "behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." Matthew 4:11.

Christ went into the wilderness to contemplate His mission and His work. Before coming to the earth, in counsel with the Father, He had counted the cost and knew each step He must take. But now that He was man, He must once more consider His work from this new viewpoint, and as man decide upon His course. And this He did. As He found Himself "in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Philippians 2:8. This decision He had already made in heaven; now He confirms it as man.

The question before Him now would be, could He, as man, carry out the covenant provisions made in heaven? Could He, as man, withstand the power of Satan and not

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weaken under the assaults that would be made on Him? The first thirty years were over. Now He is to appear officially under the covenant agreement. Could He stand the test? Hitherto there had been no special temptations, but only such as are common to men. But now He had come to a crisis. God had asked men to be faithful unto death. Now Christ was to feel what this would be like. Was He ready to resist "unto blood, striving against sin"? See Hebrews 12:4.

He was overwhelmed as the magnitude of the task rose before Him. Food was forgotten, rest was forgotten, the wild beasts which surrounded Him—all was as nothing compared to the test He must pass. As He daily grew weaker, His determination grew stronger. He would be faithful unto death. On Him depended the whole plan of redemption; He must not fail.

And He did not fail. It nearly took His life, but having made the decision, and having resisted the devil, He now knew what He could do. He knew that He could stand any test that would come to Him. In the wilderness He had met Satan, and even in His weakened condition He had won out. That experience and victory brought courage to Him in the days to come. He had met Satan on his own ground and conquered him. He could do it again.

The True Fast

Christ's forty-day fast did not come about by a decision on His part to go out in the wilderness and fast that many days. It came about in a most natural way as He considered His lifework. He was so absorbed in His contemplations and so overwhelmed with the cost of His undertaking, that He gave Himself to prayer and meditation, and forgot everything else. In a minor way, men experience similar reactions, wherein, because of the task

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in which they are engaged, they forget everything else.

I have seen people in church promptly fall asleep as soon as the sermon is begun. I have known these same people to begin reading a book in the evening and become so interested in it that they would keep on reading all night with no thought of sleep.

There are those who become so interested in their work that they forget to eat and to sleep. Thomas Edison was one of these. He would become so wrapped up in an experiment that his food would remain uneaten on the table and his bed untouched, until he had solved the particular problem on which he was working. He was known to go without food and sleep for days. He was so interested in his work that creature comforts were neglected. Job felt this when he said, "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." Job 23:12.

We may therefore confidently say, that true fasting comes as a result of absorption in the work we are doing. It is indicative of dedication in a high degree, of consecration to a task, of complete absorption in one's work so that we are oblivious of everything else. It was this that Christ experienced as they nailed Him to the tree. His agony of soul was so great that "His physical pain was hardly felt."—*The Desire of Ages,* page 753.

Moses when on Mount Sinai fasted forty days and forty nights, and "neither did eat bread nor drink water." Deuteronomy 9:9. After he had broken the tables of stone, he again fasted forty days. Says he, "I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned." Verse 18. Elijah also fasted forty days. 1 Kings 19:8. Such fasts were observed as a special preparation for a great work and closely connected with the presence of the Lord. When certain occasions arose and danger

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threatened, or some supreme event portended, men fasted. The spiritual part of man took precedence over the physical and dominated it completely, so that its needs were neglected. It is interesting to note that, when Moses took Aaron and the seventy elders with him to the mount, from a distance "they saw God, and did eat and drink." Exodus 24:11. Moses went farther up, and spake with God "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend," and he "did neither eat bread, nor drink water" for forty days. Exodus 23:11; Deuteronomy 9:18. Man can live forty days without food; but no man can live forty days without water unless a definite miracle is performed. That Moses did so signifies that God had complete control over him and that the spiritual controlled the physical. We are not told that Moses became weak or hungry because of his long fast. The physical nature was completely dominated by the spiritual. Fasting thus becomes symbolic of complete consecration.

Pharisees and Fasting

The Pharisees had made fasting a sign of piety and an opportunity for parading their religion. They put on "a sad countenance: for they disfigured their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Matthew 6:16-18.

The Pharisees fasted twice a week (Luke 18:12), on Thursday, the day Moses ascended Mount Sinai, and Monday, the day he came down. When they fasted, they did not wash or bathe, or anoint the body, or shave the head, or wear sandals; but they put ashes on their heads.

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Thus all men could readily see when they fasted, and give them due reverence. Of one of the Pharisees it is said that he fasted so often that his face was always dark —he never washed. In all this kind of fasting Christ showed no interest. It was not the kind of fast which He approved.

John's disciples fasted, but Christ's did not. The Pharisees noted this, and fastened on this as an excuse for arousing jealousy between the two groups. At one time, when Christ was eating with "many publicans and sinners," the Pharisees not only raised the question of the propriety of doing so, but asked, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not?" Mark 2:15-18. Christ gave them a diplomatic and significant answer, and then dropped the question. He was not particularly interested in the matter. He did not condemn, nor did He favor. He left that for each to decide. But if they did fast, they were to do it so as not to be seen of men. Nevertheless, in the matter of the young lunatic, He let it be understood that some things cannot be done without fasting, and that for special occasions, prayer and fasting are necessary.

We are to conclude that in certain cases God will honor the prayers of His people only if they appear so much in earnest that they will deprive themselves of necessary food if need be that others may be helped. The disciples were evidently anxious that the young man be healed, but their predominant desire had not reached the point where they were willing to deprive themselves in order to help others. The story of the young man seems to teach that God will do something for a man who is deadly in earnest and who is willing to pay the cost, that He will not do for a man who is mildly interested in the case, but is not willing to deprive himself of anything or sacrifice

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to obtain the necessary results. A man who is willing to deprive himself of daily bread may be presumed to be in earnest. When a man gets to that point, God will hear, if by the healing God's name may be honored.

According to this, God leaves ordinary fasting to the individual conscience. But the servant of God who feels God's honor is at stake, who takes the situation so seriously that he is willing to do anything for his Lord and even deprive himself of needed food—God will honor that man and permit him to taste of "the powers of the world to come." Hebrews 6:5. In him will be a fulfillment of Christ's statement, that "the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father." John 14:12. Fasting, as thus conceived, stands for complete and entire surrender, of wholehearted consecration, and sanctification. And thus fasting has a place even today. The great works that shall yet be done by the church of God will not be done without prayer and fasting. But let all beware of ostentation and any outward sign of mortification.

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11

Why God Delays Answers to Prayer

THERE are many reasons why God does not answer all prayers, or why He delays to answer. The greatest reason is sin. Says the psalmist, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 66:18. To "regard" here means to think well of, to be pleased with, to love. Of Christ it is written, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed Thee." Hebrews 1:9. Christ did not "regard" iniquity in His heart; He hated it. Therefore God anointed Him.

"Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear." Isaiah 59:2. Note these dreadful words: "Though they shall cry unto Me, I will not hearken." Jeremiah 11:11. "Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear." Isaiah 1:15.

If the Lord does not hear our prayers, it is not because He is unwilling or unable to help. "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." Isaiah 59:1. The Lord can hear what we say, but He may not answer, because sin has made a separation between Him and us.

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This does not mean that we have to be sinless before the Lord will answer prayer. But it does mean that we must not regard sin, not love or harbor it, but hate it as Christ hated it.

This point needs to be stressed lest some become discouraged as they think of their sins of the past, and fear that God will not hear them. Does God not hear sinners? Most assuredly He does. If He did not, no prayer from human lips would ever reach Him; for "all have sinned." Romans 3:23. David himself sinned grievously; yet, upon repentance, he could say, "Verily God hath heard me; He hath attended to the voice of my prayer." Psalm 66:19. David had sinned deeply, but he repented as deeply as he sinned; and he no longer looked with an approving, covetous eye on sin as he had done before. Almost in surprise he exclaims, "Verily God *hath* heard me." If God heard David despite his sin, all may take courage. David committed adultery, and, worse, he murdered the faithful husband—a sin that would seem unforgivable. We repeat, if God heard David, we may be confident that God will hear us.

There are times when God does not answer our prayers immediately, and we are tempted to fear that He will not answer at all. This may be the case, but more often God waits until He in His wisdom decides that the time has come to respond.

There are three ways in which God may answer our prayers: He may say, "No;" He may say, "Yes;" or He may say, "Wait." The last answer is the most common, and in some respects the hardest; but it is always the most profitable for us if we have learned to wait on God.

One reason why God waits is to test our sincerity and earnestness. Do we really pray with an honest heart and a sincere desire to know and to do God's will and abide

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by the answer, whatever that may be? Or is our prayer but the whim of a moment? Are we like Pilate, who asked the momentous question, "What is truth?" and went away without waiting for an answer? John 18:38. His question was not grounded in a desire to know the truth in order to live it. It was merely an idle question asked out of curiosity. Speculative questions do not interest God. Pilate was not sufficiently interested to wait for an answer, so he never found out. "If any man will do His will, he shall know," says God. John 7:17. That is, only as a man will *do* God's will, will he in reality know. When we pray to God we should ask ourselves, Are we in dead earnest? Do we really want to know the truth for the purpose of doing it? Or are we playing with God and sacred things?

God Wants Us to Decide

Another reason why God does not answer all questions immediately is found in the fact that it is not best for us to have Him settle all questions. He wants us to wrestle with the problem ourselves and attempt to find the solution. This is based on the sound proposition that it is not good for anyone to have someone else do his thinking for him. God has given us our minds, and He wants us to use them. If He answered all our prayers, we would never need to do any studying or thinking. But God does not wish to deprive us of the opportunity of reaching our own conclusions, which is a vital factor in the formation of character.

Within limits, children should early be taught and permitted to make decisions for themselves. While this can easily be carried to extreme, as in ultramodern psychology, the practice in itself, if kept within proper bounds, is of definite value. When parents insist on making decisions

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for the children on every little point, they harm the child. Children should have increasingly greater responsibility placed upon them, should have opportunity to make decisions for themselves, so that when they are grown they can take their place in society fully competent to order their own lives.

At times parents are asked by their children to help them do their homework. The children find some problems which the teachers have assigned a little hard, and so they ask for help. It may be proper to help them, if it is done judiciously and in moderation. But if the parents habitually worked the problems for the children, they would do more harm than good. In the examinations held in school, such children would be sadly handicapped, having never had to work a problem unaided.

If God should solve all our problems, if He should answer all our prayers, He would make the same mistake that parents do when they work the problems for their children. God would ruin us effectively in so doing. As it is, God lets us use the strength we have, then He adds whatever we need, and we are the stronger for it. This is what Paul meant when he said, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Philippians 2:12, 13.

Problems in the Bible

For every difficulty we solve we will be stronger and more able to do more efficient work. If we are to build character into the life, we must learn to tackle difficult situations. To have every prayer answered promptly would be disastrous for us. God wants sturdy, self-reliant men and women. To develop that kind of people He gives them opportunity to work out their own problems

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as far as they are able. He will help; but He will give us only as much help as we need, not necessarily as much as we want.

There are problems in the Bible for which there are no ready solutions. This is in accordance with the principles here discussed. God wants us to study, to use the mind He has given us. He has made plain every great doctrine; all essential points of faith are clearly and authoritatively stated. There is no ambiguity, and hence there is no excuse for ignorance. But there are many questions God leaves for us to solve. He could easily have given us the solution as well as the problem, but He chooses not to do so. At times we wonder why God did not do things differently. To illustrate:

The Bible clearly states that we are to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. All will agree that this is a sound principle. But the question readily arises: What things are Caesar's? What things are God's? On this there is no agreement among men, and God gives no definite answer. He leaves that for us to settle.

Tithing is a plain Bible requirement. But what is tithe? On this point opinions vary. Does it mean the gross income, or are certain exemptions permissible? And, if so, what? God leaves that question for us.

The question of Sabbathkeeping is another vital doctrine. On the seventh day we are to rest and not do our own work. What kind of work is permitted and counted essential? What is forbidden? Farmers have no easy task in determining how far they may go in doing essential work on God's holy day. Physicians are constantly confronted with problems relating to Sabbath observance. Who will settle them? Housewives, janitors, and ministers have their problems in Sabbath observance. In all

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these matters the individual conscience must decide. And God has a réason for this. The making of decisions is in itself character building.

The man who habitually decides every tithing question in his own favor is not building character for eternity. The same is true of those who decide questions of Sabbathkeeping too liberally, or any other question which God has left for man's decision.

Let us not be discouraged or perplexed when God does not answer promptly every question we bring to Him. He is waiting to see what we will do, and is giving us an opportunity to make our own decisions. The waiting time is a testing time, a time to search our hearts, to determine our motives, and to come to conclusions. In this work we may confidently ask God's help. He may not solve every problem for us,—we should not expect Him to,—but He can give hints and suggestions that will keep us on the right track.

God's delay in answering our prayers, therefore, is for a purpose. To solve every problem for us would be disastrous. God is too wise to do this. He gives us time to think things through. In our extremity He will step in, but we must use all our resources first.

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12

Unanswered Prayers

WE ARE not to think that God has not heard our prayers because no favorable answer is given. The heavenly Father hears every prayer that is addressed to Him, but it is not always possible for Him to grant the request. For this there may be several reasons. We may not know what is best for us, and so may ask unwisely. God may have some better thing in store for us, and hence does not give us that for which we ask. We may ask for patience, and, knowing that tribulation works patience, God may send affliction as an answer to our request. Every prayer comes up before God and is given due consideration, and the answer sent is the one we would want if we knew all the circumstances as God does.

The Bible records many instances of answered prayers, and also many prayers that were not answered. When God denies a prayer, it is not necessarily because the petitioner is unworthy. Quite the contrary. We shall cite the cases of Moses and Christ in support of this view. It must be admitted that each of these men was dear to the heart of God, and that the denial of their prayers was not because God did not esteem them highly. Yet their prayers were not granted: Moses, because he failed to give God

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the glory; Christ, because He had taken man's place, and must experience the feeling of being forsaken of God as well as of man.

Moses' prayer that he be permitted to enter the Promised Land was a most natural one. Forty years he had herded sheep in the wilderness, and forty more years he had led Israel, until they were about to enter the Promised Land. He now stood before the entrance to Canaan and begged God pathetically if he might not enter. Hear him plead, "I besought the Lord at that time, saying, . . . I pray Thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto Me of this matter. . . . Thou shalt not go over this Jordan." Deuteronomy 3: 23-27.

This must have been a grievous, almost staggering disappointment to Moses. For this moment he had worked forty years, and now at the very time when he could have entered Canaan, God denied his request. He had been disobedient in what might be considered a minor matter. On a previous occasion God had asked him to *smite* the rock, while this time he was to *speak* to it. Instead of speaking as God had commanded, he smote the rock, and it gave forth water. Because of this disobedience God said to Moses and Aaron, "Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." Numbers 20:12.

In this case more was at stake than a rebuke to Moses personally. His punishment was a lesson to Israel as a whole. Naturally, Israel expected Moses to lead them into the land to the border of which he had brought them after

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these many years. Surely, God would not deny him the one thing for which he had toiled, prayed, and endured so many hardships!

When the news first reached Israel that Moses had been denied entrance, it must have caused consternation to the whole people. They had come to look upon Moses not only as their leader, but as their hope, their intercessor, God's chosen man. What terrible sin had he committed that he was to be set aside?

They knew that their fathers had died in the wilderness because of sin and lack of faith. But Moses! What had he done? It must have been some great sin beyond what the people could imagine, or God would not so deal with him.

It was therefore a matter of perplexity to them when they learned that Moses' sin was a seemingly trivial thing, one that did not deserve the punishment God had meted out. They knew that God was particular even in small things; but the fact that Moses had smitten the rock instead of speaking to it seemed so inconsequential that it would hardly deserve notice.

But God did notice it, and in such a way that it was not merely a rebuke to Moses, but a lesson to Israel in carefulness even in the smallest matters. The reason for Moses' ungranted prayer (Deuteronomy 3:23-27), was primarily his disobedience; but chiefly it was for the sake of the people who were largely responsible for his transgression and who needed to be shaken from their self-satisfied complacency. Said Moses pointedly, "The Lord was wroth with me for *your* sakes." Verse 26. They could not fail to understand that if God was strict with Moses, He would be no less strict with them. They needed to have this impressed upon them as they were about to enter the Promised Land.

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Moses was not permitted to enter the Promised Land, the earthly Canaan. His request was not granted; but God had reserved some better thing for him. We do not know at what time Michael, the Archangel, "disputed about the body of Moses" (Jude 9); but we do know that Moses was taken to heaven, and that later he appeared to Christ on the mount of transfiguration (Matthew 17:3). Moses did not enter the earthly Canaan; he entered the heavenly instead. God's denial of his request brought Moses a greater reward than he asked for.

Jesus Christ

At the supreme moment in Christ's earth experience He prayed, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Matthew 26:39. The second time He prayed, "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." Verse 42. After finding the disciples asleep, He "went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words." Verse 44.

We have no record of the answers which Christ received to His repeated prayers, except as they are suggested by the text. It appears that after His first request he was told that there was no other way by which the cup could be removed if He were to accomplish the task He had come to do. He had said to God, "All things are possible unto Thee" (Mark 14:36), which was true in itself; for God could have removed the cup; but that would have vitiated the plan according to which Christ was to give His life. It *was* possible for God to remove the cup, but it was not possible to do this and also save man.

This information must have been conveyed to Christ as an answer to His request, for He accepts the decision

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in the words, "If this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." Matthew 26:42. This prayer breathes complete submission after He understood that the cup could not be removed.

Christ's prayer to have the cup removed "if it be possible" can be understood only in the light of Christ's perfect humanity. He had taken man's place with man's limitations. Hitherto Christ had been one with God, and there had been perfect union and co-operation. But now He stood in a different relation to the Father. The sins of the world were placed upon Him, and He must bear the consequences. With the load of the world's sin resting upon Him, He must suffer the Father's displeasure because of sin. "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree," or as a more correct rendering has it, "up to the tree." 1 Peter 2:24. Being thus made sin for us, God must treat Him as we deserve to be treated, and must turn His face from His beloved Son.

Christ had fully understood the cost of saving man as He and the Father in the councils of eternity had evolved the only plan that could save man. He knew and understood Gethsemane, Golgotha, and Calvary. But now when He was man, clouds enveloped Him. He could no longer see His Father's reconciling face. All was oppressive gloom. It was one thing for Christ as *God* to decide to die for man. It was another thing for Him as *man* to pass through the dark waters alone. It was the realization of the necessity of being separated from the Father that broke the heart of the Son of God, and in His humanity He shrank from it. But faith broke through, and in submission He says, "Thy will be done."

Was Christ's request that the cup pass from Him denied? Yes, the cup was not and could not be removed. He must drink it.

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Was His prayer heard? Yes. Hear these words: "In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." Hebrews 5:7. Christ "was heard," but He was not saved from death nor from drinking the cup.

Are we then to draw the conclusion that God heard His prayer but denied the petition, and that the word "heard" here does not denote what it does in other places, namely, that of a favorable answer, but only that God heard what He said? Not necessarily; for in a larger sense God granted Christ's petition. This can be understood only as we appreciate the full force of the words, "Thy will be done."

In using these words, Christ submitted Himself so fully to the Father, that the Father's will became His. In this submission lay the answer to Christ's request. Christ's will was fully in harmony with the Father's; and as it was not possible to remove the cup, God's will became also Christ's will. Thus His prayer was answered.

With the examples of Moses and Christ before us, we should not be discouraged if our prayers are not answered immediately, or indeed, if they are never answered. There are good reasons for what God does. There are times when God ought not to answer our prayers for our own sake or that of others. In all conditions we are to submit to God, and whatever the answer to our prayers may be, we should from the heart be able to say, "Thy will be done."

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13

Useless Prayers

THOSE who rejected the first message could not be benefited by the second; neither were they benefited by the midnight cry, which was to prepare them to enter with Jesus by faith into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. And by rejecting the two former messages, they have so darkened their understanding that they can see no light in the third angel's message, which shows the way into the most holy place. I saw that as the Jews crucified Jesus, so the nominal churches had crucified these messages, and therefore they have no knowledge of the way into the most holy, and they cannot be benefited by the intercession of Jesus there. Like the Jews, who offered their useless sacrifices, they offer up their useless prayers to the apartment which Jesus has left."—*Early Writings,* pages 260, 261.

We are particularly interested in the last statement, "Like the Jews, who offered their useless sacrifices, they offer up their useless prayers to the apartment which Jesus has left." When Christ died on the cross, type met antitype, and the temple services ceased to be of value or have any spiritual significance. Yet the Jews continued to offer sacrifices, ignorant of the fact that Christ by His death

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had abolished them. It is to this custom of the Jews that the author has reference in the statement that the Jews offered useless sacrifices and that in like manner some now offer useless prayers to the apartment which Jesus has left. Just what is the meaning of this? Does anyone ever pray to an apartment?

To obtain an understanding of this, it is necessary to refer to the sanctuary built by Moses in the wilderness.

When God brought Israel out of Egypt to bring them into the Promised Land, He commanded them to build Him a sanctuary that He might dwell among them. Exodus 25:8. At this time they were wandering in the wilderness with no fixed abode, and they therefore erected a temporary structure, called the "tabernacle" or "sanctuary," which they could move from place to place. When Israel later entered Canaan, they erected a most magnificent structure which came to be known as "Solomon's temple," one of the wonders of the ancient world. While the temple was much larger than the sanctuary, both were of the same essential design.

The Building

The sanctuary was divided into two apartments: the first, called "the holy," and the second, called "the most holy." The first apartment contained three articles of furniture: the altar of incense, the table of shewbread, and the seven-branched candlestick.

The second apartment was called "the most holy" because this was God's dwelling place where He revealed Himself on special occasions. In it was the ark of the covenant, a wooden chest overlaid with gold, which contained the two tables of stone in which God had engraved with His own finger the Ten Commandments. The cover of the ark was called "the mercy seat," on top of which

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were the figures of two angels made of pure gold; and over the mercy seat hovered the Shekinah glory, emblematic of the presence of God.

There were no windows in the building, and the only light came from the golden candlestick, some of the seven lamps of which were always burning. The most holy apartment was dark, consonant with God's desire expressed to Solomon: "The Lord said that He would dwell in the thick darkness." 1 Kings 8:12.

None of the priests were ever permitted in the most holy place; the high priest only could enter one day in the year, while he performed his service there. As soon as he was done, the most holy was closed, and not opened again until the next year. The most holy was considered so sacred that no one might even be in the first apartment while the high priest was in the second.

The Service

The common priests served in the first apartment only, where each morning and evening they offered incense on the golden altar which stood close to the veil separating the two apartments. The meaning of the offering of incense is thus recorded by the revelator. He saw seven angels which stood before God. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." Revelation 8:3, 4.

As the priest offered incense, he also offered prayer, and his prayer with the incense came up before God as a sweet-smelling savor. On certain occasions the priest

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also brought with him blood from the sacrifices offered on the altar of burnt offering outside in the court, and a small part of this he put upon the horns of the altar of incense, while another part of the blood he sprinkled toward the veil behind which was the ark containing the law. The symbolism of this is clear: A man had sinned and had brought the required sacrifice and slain it. Then the priest had sprinkled of the blood on the altar of burnt offering. In case the anointed priest sinned, some of the blood was taken into the first apartment and there sprinkled toward the veil, in token of the law of God which the sinner had broken. This constituted a blood atonement, and as some of the blood was also placed on the horns of the altar of incense, the prayers that ascended to God with the incense also contained evidence of the man's repentance and of his belief in the atoning blood.

This service of incense and blood was carried on every day of the year in the first apartment, and as a result men obtained forgiveness. It is repeatedly stated that "it shall be forgiven them," "it shall be forgiven him." See Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18. Hence the first apartment came to be known as the place where forgiveness was to be had.

On the Day of Atonement the high priest officiated in the second apartment. As stated above, while the high priest was in the most holy place no one else was permitted in the sanctuary, not even a priest. Should a sinner bring his lamb that day, he would find no priest to minister it for him. The attention of all was rivited on the high priest as he entered the sanctuary; and while he was inside, all Israel lay upon the ground seeking the Lord and praying that God would accept the ministration of the chief priest when he was in the most holy pleading for them.

Israel considered this day as a day of judgment, when

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the sins of the year came in review before God. "Whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people." Leviticus 23:29.

The Jewish Encyclopedia, page 286, article, "Atonement," quotes this concerning the Day of Atonement:

" 'God, seated on His throne to judge the world, at the same time Judge, Pleader, Expert, and Witness, openeth the Book of Records; it is read, every man's signature being found therein. The great trumpet is sounded; a still, small voice is heard; the angels shudder, saying, this is the day of judgment: for His very ministers are not pure before God. As a shepherd mustereth his flock, causing them to pass under his rod, so doth God cause every living soul to pass before Him to fix the limit of every creature's life and to foreordain its destiny. On New Year's Day the decree is written; on the Day of Atonement it is sealed who shall live and who are to die, etc. But penitence, prayer, and charity may avert the evil decree.' "

The Meaning for the Christian

These considerations are of absorbing interest to the Christian as he realizes that the temple services, including the services of the Day of Atonement, were symbolic of a higher service above in the heavenly temple, and that we have in Christ "such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." Hebrews 8:1, 2. As our Mediator, "Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place,

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having obtained eternal redemption for us." Hebrews 9:11, 12. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Verse 24.

The work of the priests in the first, apartment of the sanctuary on earth, was confined solely to the forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness is good, but it does not go far enough. It was "a shadow of good things to come," but it was only a shadow "and not the very image of the things;" for never could the "sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." Hebrews 10:1. All they did was to forgive sins *after* they had been committed. But forgiveness is not enough. Sin must be *stopped,* not merely forgiven. As long as men are satisfied with forgiveness; they will never reach the standard God has set. Christ came not merely to forgive sin, but "to *finish* the transgression, and to make *an end of sins,* and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Daniel 9:24. If a man has finished transgression, made an end of sin; when he has made for him reconciliation for iniquity and is in possession of everlasting righteousness, he stands approved of God. All this Christ came to do. Forgiveness of sin is wonderful; to have made an end of sin, is surpassingly wonderful. Such a man God can present as His finished product. Forgiveness is solely an act of God. Holiness is a product of God's and man's combined effort.

The High Priest

The high priest made a very thorough soul preparation before he dared present himself before God. He had to attain to a state of holiness in entering the most holy place; for without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

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See Hebrews 12:14. Priests, as forgiven men, might enter the first apartment; but only a holy man could enter the second. That was why the high priest had upon his miter a plate of gold inscribed, "Holiness to the Lord." Exodus 28:36. This plate he must always bear. "It shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord." Verse 38. Even his garments had to be holy. Leviticus 16:4; Exodus 28:2.

This becomes of importance as we consider Paul's invitation "to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Hebrews 10:19. Only a holy man could enter then; only holy men can enter now. To go with Christ all the way, an expression we often hear, means to go with Him into the holiest of all; not merely into the first apartment, but into the second.

The time has come to take this advance step. Throughout the ages men have preached the glorious message of forgiveness of sin, and millions have turned to God and been converted. That message is still to be preached, for we will always need the forgiving power of God; and it is not possible to enter the second apartment without going through the first. But to God's elect He sends a message to come with Him by the new and living way which He has prepared for us. Those who thus enter with Him, He will keep from falling, while those who refuse to go farther, will sometime find their prayers to be useless. He who depends on God's promise of forgiveness and expects to sin and sin again, and keep on sinning and trusting to God's forgiveness, is presuming on the mercy of God. Let him believe that the Christ who came to make an end of sin, will also give him power to go and sin no more.

We are now ready to consider the statement quoted at the beginning of this chapter: "Like the Jews, who offered

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their useless sacrifices, they offer up their useless prayers to the apartment which Jesus has left."

A little girl who had done something wrong was asked if she ought not to ask Jesus to forgive her. To this she gave an emphatic No! The perplexed parents asked if she had not done wrong, which she readily admitted. But still she did not want to pray. Why? She said simply that she did not want to ask Jesus to forgive her. She hadn't quite finished what she was doing. She wanted to do a little more first and then ask forgiveness.

While we cannot recommend such a procedure, the philosophy in itself is not bad. She had the right idea that she ought to finish doing wrong before she asked forgiveness. It is useless to ask God to forgive us for stealing, if we intend to keep on being dishonest. We are to make an end of sin; we are to go and sin no more. It is useless to ask God to forgive us for breaking the commandments if we intend to continue in violation. God wants to do more for us than forgive our transgressions. He is waiting for us to claim the power that will keep us from sinning.

With God in Our Prayer Life

For us to enter with Jesus into the holiest of all, does not mean that we are to enter a room; it means that we are to enter into an experience comparable to that of the high priest who was getting ready to meet his God. To pray to Christ in the first apartment; to pray for forgiveness, and then sin and sin again, is displeasing to God. We are to enter with Him into the holiest of all and there find the help we need for holy living. Forgiveness in itself is wonderful; sanctification is still more so. God wants us to go with Him all the way.

In the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, one prayer was effective and the other useless. The Pharisee

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began by saying, "God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are." Luke 18:11. He was not an extortioner; he was not unjust, not an adulterer, not even as bad as this publican. He was a good man. He fasted and paid tithe. The publican's prayer was short, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He "went down to his house justified rather than the other." Verses 13, 14. The prayer of the Pharisee was unacceptable to God. It was grounded in pride and conscious superiority. Such prayers are in vain.

Once when Israel had sinned, "Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads." Joshua 7:6. Joshua prayed earnestly and got an unexpected answer. "Get thee up," said God, "wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned." Verses 10, 11. As Joshua hesitated, came the one word, "Up." Verse 13.

What was wrong? Was it not proper for Joshua to pray? God did not think so, not at that time. There was sin in the camp, and the first thing was to go vigorously to work and root out the sin. That was why God rather roughly told Joshua to get up and not lie there on his face praying and, when he didn't move fast enough, gave that one-word command, "Up," which doubtless made him move. God was teaching Joshua that prayer is not a substitute for action. Joshua was praying, but his prayer was not approved. There was work to be done.

Pharisees

Hypocrisy is one of the subtlest of sins. Christ might spare a poor sinful woman and refuse to condemn her, but when He found that the Pharisees "devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers," His wrath was aroused, and He did not spare. Mark 12:40. Their

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hypocrisy was their sin. He called them hypocrites, fools, blind, children of hell. Matthew 23:15, 17. "These shall receive greater damnation." Mark 12:40.

Why such language and such denunciations? It was not because of their sins as such, serious though they were, and meriting the rebuke. It was their hypocrisy that stirred Christ's soul. He declared to the Pharisees, "Ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." "Ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." Matthew 23:28, 27.

Never before had Christ spoken so harshly. These men used religion as a cloak to hide their wickedness, and dared address the most high God in prayer. That was blasphemy, and Christ's whole being revolted against them. Their prayers were an insult to God.

Christ's reaction to the Pharisees measures His hatred of insincerity and pretense of any kind. Let all have in mind that the Pharisees were not the only ones guilty of this sin. Anything that savors of pretense, falsehood, lying, guile, fabrication, distortion, exaggeration, dissimulation, deceit, or misrepresentation is anathema with God. The Lord wants His people to tell the truth, live the truth, believe the truth, love the truth. In their mouth must be found no guile. Such people will do what they promise; they will be true to the truth though the heavens fall; they will be honest and fair; their word will be sacred to them, the conscience void of offense. And their prayers God will hear.

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